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Abstract

Archiving Transgender: Affects, Logics, and the Power of Queer History examines three archives that collect transgender material in order to analyze archives as rhetorical sites where a complex interplay of language, politics, logic, and affect shape archival research. Current scholarship in rhetorical historiography has (re)turned to archives to consider the rhetorical dimensions of archives themselves and the impact these dimensions have on researchers (Kirsch and Rohan; Morris; Ferreira-Buckley). I extend and complicate this line of inquiry by focusing specifically on transgender archival practices and logics. Transgender archiving is an especially rich site for critical investigation because of the complexities of the term “transgender” itself, including its recent emergence, its current academic slant, its repeated failure to represent those to whom it is often applied, and the ethical considerations that are prompted by its use.

I consider a spectrum of archival contexts—including grassroots, non-profit, and university archives—to better understand the variety of approaches possible for archiving transgender materials. Specifically, I investigate three sites with sizable transgender holdings: The Sexual Minorities Archives in Northampton, Massachusetts; The GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco, California; and The National Transgender Library and Archive in Ann Arbor, Michigan. My methods are multi-modal, including theoretical, rhetorical, and qualitative research methods, which consist of spatial and textual analysis, close reading, direct observation, and approximately 20 interviews with archivists, volunteers, and researchers.

From this research I develop three interconnected inroads for recognizing and evaluating the rhetorical qualities of transgender archiving, which are each explored in a separate chapter of this dissertation. For the first inroad, which is the first data chapter, I provide rhetorical histories of the three archives to demonstrate the ways that these archives emerged as political responses to particular historical climates. Because these archives serve a larger function beyond aiding researchers, they have politically-charged environments where researchers are likely to be influenced in both how they read historical materials and what they then do with those materials. This directly corresponds with a second inroad, which constitutes the second data chapter of my dissertation, where I consider various archival logics and their impacts. Archival logics is a phrase that I use to refer to the entire access system that archives employ, including classification and organizational systems. As grassroots classification systems elucidate, archival logics are always subjective and as a result, they encourage particular research pathways and privilege particular researchers. The third inroad attempts to capture the complex affects (including identification, disidentification, trauma, shame, pleasure, desire, and attachment) that can occur in archival encounters with transgender materials. Such affects, I argue in this third data chapter, should be taken seriously as rhetorical interactions, which can be either intentional or accidental, but nonetheless have direct impacts on the way people experience history.

*Archiving Transgender:
Affects, Logics, and the Power of Queer History*

By

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric
in the Graduate School of Syracuse University

May 2010

Approved: _____
Professor Margaret Himley

Date: _____

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*To all who seek transgender pasts,
and to all who have become the pasts we seek.*

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Chapter One

Revisionist Historiography and the Archival Turn in Rhetoric and Composition

As historians of rhetoric interested in rhetorical theory and practice, we know much work remains to be done, work that challenges and in some cases explodes old definitions of what counts as worthy of historical record. (Ferreira-Buckley, "Rescuing," 582)

Record: (n.) 2. The fact or condition of being preserved as knowledge, esp. by being put into writing; knowledge or information preserved or handed down in this way.

Record: (v.) 9. a. To relate in writing; to narrate or mention in a written account; to put or set down in writing; to put on record. Also, in modern use, of telegraphic and other instruments: To set down (a message, etc.) in some permanent form.¹

A decade has passed since the above quotation was published in Linda Ferreira-Buckley's contribution to the 1999 *College English* forum "Archivists With Attitude," but the work before historians of rhetoric remains unchanged. Decades of historical work in Rhetoric and Composition could be read in this vein, as challenges to what counts as worthy of historical record, and still it is never possible to fully complete this work. The simple reason for this is that the historical record is inherently exclusive and it therefore requires an exercise of power that is always oppressive to some, even when it seeks to liberate others.

¹ Both definitions of "record" taken from *The Oxford English Dictionary* Online.

As a material homeplace of the historical record, archives provide a contact point for historians of rhetoric to encounter and study the writing of history, and sometimes to write histories themselves. Far more than passive repositories of documents, archives mark the convergence of the historical record (documents) *and* historical recording (the preserving of documents). Archives necessarily require a radical recontextualization of historical records in order to create *the* historical record in a single location. As a result of this process, as Antoinette Burton usefully points out, “all archival sources are at once primary and secondary sources: neither raw nor fully cooked...but richly textured as both narrative and meta-narrative, as both archive and history-in-the-making” (12). We can read “record,” then, as a verb and a noun, invoking the writing, memory, recontextualizing, and technology that mediate history. It is in this double sense of “record” that this rhetorical study of archives begins.

Archival work in Rhetoric and Composition is part of the larger project of rhetorical historiography within the discipline, which theorizes the writing of history. The “rhetorical” modifier applies not only to “history” (as in “rhetorical history”), but also the rhetorical quality of the writing of history. Archives are at the center of the larger discourse about rhetorical historiography—not only do they require us to consider our basic understandings of “truth” and “evidence,” but as arbiters of historical knowledge, they force historians to recognize their own (quite rhetorical) relationship to the materials found there. Rhetorical historiography has a long and expansive tradition in the field of Rhetoric and Composition but for the purposes of this project I will focus on revisionist rhetorical historiography, which is the body of scholarship most directly relevant here.

In this chapter, I begin with a lineage of revisionist rhetorical historiography to illustrate the ways that our field has challenged notions of historical truth and opened up space for a variety of innovative approaches to histories of rhetoric. In the subsequent section, I examine the archival turn in rhetorical studies, which is a growing body of scholarship developed out of rhetorical historiography which treats archives as the subject of research. In the third section, I review some relevant work from other disciplines to provide a broader context for the archival turn in rhetorical studies. In the fourth section, I explain how this dissertation on transgender archiving contributes to the archival turn. In the final section, I conclude with a chapter-by-chapter overview of the rest of the dissertation.

Revisionist Historiography in Rhetoric and Composition

“That will do,” he said sharply. “It is a myth! It does not exist!...I regret telling you such a foolish story!

We will return, if you please, to history, to solid, believable, verifiable fact!” (Rowling 152)

It may seem strange to begin a lineage of revisionist rhetorical historiography with a passage from J.K. Rowling’s acclaimed *Harry Potter* series, but this short passage taken from the second book, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, aptly illustrates the popular perception of history as “solid, believable, verifiable *fact!*” This line was spoken by the ghost teacher of the History of Magic Professor Binns, who “many people said he hadn’t noticed he was dead” (148). Though Binns never interacted with students in his class, on this occasion he succumbs to the persistent interruptions of the students and diverts from his typical pedagogy of monotone lecturing to answer questions about

the “fictitious” Chamber of Secrets. As it not surprisingly turns out, the chamber that Binns declares “a myth” that “does not exist” is in fact real. This dialog captures the litany of binaries that can be found in popular perceptions of history, including history/story, fact/fiction, and truth/myth. And like most, Professor Binns’s binary collapses in the end when myth becomes truth.

In rhetorical historiography, scholars have been involved in dialogues about these same binaries for decades, particularly within the lineage of scholarship that can be understood as revisionist historiography.² For the purposes of this project, revisionist historiography within the discipline can be traced to a 1987 issue of *PRE/TEXT* (8.1-2) where several scholars in the history of rhetoric contributed articles on historiographic methods that were “Re/Visionary.” Though rhetorical historiography was certainly debated before 1987 (see Crowley; Graff and Leff), this publication marked an important turn to theorizing revisionist historiography in Rhetoric and Composition.

Framed as an answer to the question “What are Re/Visionary Histories of Rhetorics?”, this issue of *PRE/TEXT* introduces the concept of revisionist historiography in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. The *FORE/WORD* explains that the group of scholars represented in the issue formed a “Study-Group” because they were “concerned not only with the fact that there are scandalously few histories of rhetorics but that there is consciously no real/apparent concern for *the rhetorics* of the histories of rhetorics” (5). This split between “histories of rhetorics” and “the rhetorics of the histories of rhetorics”

² Outside of Rhetoric and Composition, there are many insightful arguments about history that likely informed revisionist historiography. Most notable among those, to my mind, are Nietzsche’s *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” and de Certeau’s *The Writing of History*.

illustrates an important shift from scholarship on historical subjects to scholarship on history itself, a shift from rhetorical history to rhetorical historiography.

Susan Jarratt's article on Sophistic historiography opens the forum and she encourages an expansion of the subjects of rhetorical history and a disruption of the single and continuous version of rhetorical history (11). John Schilb's contribution, which follows, expresses a frustration that many histories of rhetoric fail to recognize their own rhetoricity, which if corrected via revisionary historiography, would require more careful attention to societal differences, including gender, race, and class (31-32). James Berlin's article then suggests that revisionist historiography should also seek a future-orientation, to offer "a theoretical description of the histories that ought to follow" (48). Finally, Victor Vitanza's contribution offers a third approach—"sub/versive" historiography (which, interestingly enough, implicitly challenges his own editorial staging of the PRE/TEXT issue as interrogating Re/Visionary histories of rhetoric). As he describes it, "Sub/version understands that the overthrow of a political position (or, as far as that goes, any position or ideology) *is only a capitulation to eventual recapitulation*" (107). Consequently, the only way to upset the binary and cycle of tradition/revision is to seek a third category outside of the logic of that process. Taken together, the response of these authors to the question "What are Re/Visionary Histories of Rhetorics?" seems to be that Re/Visionary rhetorical histories should be expansive, disruptive, self-reflective, material, sub/versive and attuned to difference.

In 1988, one year after the publication of this important issue of PRE/TEXT, an Octalog was held at the Conference on College Composition and Communication called

“The Politics of Historiography.” This conversation was subsequently published in *Rhetoric Review*, and it marks another significant moment in the continuing development of revisionist historiography. In this discussion, most participants seemed to agree that the writing of history is influenced by ideology, but they passionately debated about how much ideologies should influence histories, how researchers can relate to evidence, and what role “truth” may play in history. Most resonant with the project of revisionist historiography were those scholars who encouraged rhetorical historians to be more self-reflexive. For example, James Berlin states, “Historians must...strive for a dialectical relationship with evidence, remaining sensitive to the impossibility of totality, of accounting for everything...All histories are partial accounts, are both biased and incomplete. The good histories admit this and then tell their stories. The bad attempt to dominate the past, pretending at the same time to be mere recorders of the facts” (“Octalog” 12). This final colonizing move, the domination of history, is something that revisionist historiography explicitly resists and rejects. Susan Jarratt makes a similar assertion: “I think that a history which is self-conscious and reflexive and tries to locate itself in time and place is not automatically a good history; but I would say any history that does that is better than history that doesn’t do that” (31). Jarratt articulates a commitment to recognizing the partiality of every history, the story of every *history*, which is a basic premise of revisionist rhetorical historiography.

Though revisionist historiography is concerned with the story of every history, Nan Johnson argues that there is still a standard: “As an historian, I am responsible...to the burden of proclaiming my enterprise as an attempt to tell ‘true stories’” (“Octalog”

9-10). By coupling “true” with “stories,” Johnson debunks a more traditional approach to history that clings to facts and evidence as truth and she instead implies that truth is based on perspective and narrative. She later states, “Although we can know that the nature of reality of past and present is negotiated...although we can know that histories are just stories, historians and readers alike tend to *believe* and subsequently *proceed* as if some stories were truer than others” (“Octalog” 18). Standards of “truth” are not only applied to the ways that historians treat evidence, but the histories they produce are also evaluated and treated according to how “true” they are assumed to be and how truthful a particular historian is perceived to be. These evaluations of historical truth also point to larger questions of what counts as evidence and who gets to decide.

By the early 1990s, revisionist historiography scholarship began to proliferate to such an extent that it becomes impossible for me to continue tracing a singular lineage. Throughout many subject areas of Rhetoric and Composition and Speech/Communication, scholars found rhetorical historiography to be a useful and provocative pathway and it was taken up across the disciplines. Rather than trying to account for all of these various pathways of rhetorical historiography, at this point in my review of revisionist historiography I will shift my focus to particular threads—both important publications and thematic bodies of work—that resonate specifically with this dissertation.

In 1990 in *Speech/Communication*, Carole Blair and Mary L. Kahl edited a special section of the *Western Journal of Speech Communication* titled “Rhetoric and Historiography.” In the introduction to this section, Blair and Kahl identify the “need for historians of rhetorical theory to concern themselves with their own choices” (149). By

using the framework of “choice,” Blair and Kahl highlight the agency of rhetorical historians and the myriad options they have for constructing histories. Two years later, Blair extended this argument in an article where she states, “It is especially peculiar that rhetoricians, who have identified and explored rhetorics of various fields of inquiry, have neglected the rhetoricity of their own historical studies” (403). Blair points to the incongruity of rhetoricians who have identified the rhetorics of other areas while neglecting to identify the rhetoricity of histories of rhetoric. These two articles issue a direct challenge to rhetorical historiographers to begin examining their own choices and the rhetoricity of the histories they produce.

In 1994, Vitanza edited a second important collection on revisionist historiography, *Writing Histories of Rhetoric*, which pushed revisionist historiography further into the realm of social history.³ In his contribution to the collection, Vitanza argues for an explicitly postmodern approach of revisionist rhetoric, which he offers as a theory of “hystery-writing”:

Traditional *history-writing* works with, or suffers from the nostalgia of, an original that can be recovered; *hystery-writing*, however, paratestifies to the impossibility of an original of the real (which is the intractable, the impossible) and how it must be a-voided (denegated). *History-writing* presumes the ideal or actual whereas *hystery-writing* can assume impossibility, therefore, perpetual possibility. (“Taking” 186)

³ Evidencing the importance of this collection, a follow-up book titled *Re/Theorizing Writing Histories of Rhetoric* is currently in the works, which is being edited by Michelle Ballif.

Vitanza's theory of *hystery-writing* pushes against the logic of traditional historiography by negating the idea that there is a real, original, ideal, or actual, and instead offers is a postmodern model for historiography full of "perpetual possibility."

This possibility is achieved by searching for the "excluded third." As Vitanza explains,

...this essay is in search of "the excluded third man" (Serres 1982a, 67) and "third woman" (Berg 1982), who have been excluded not only from *The History of Rhetoric* but also from writing histories/hysteries of rhetorics. Therefore, what this (my) essay is searching for is what has been systematically excluded but when finally included (if it so happens that the excluded third does "show up") will not make my or any other reader/writer's task any easier. (181)

Focusing on the that which is systematically excluded may make the task of rhetorical historiography harder, but Vitanza emphasizes that it is a key focus for revisionist historiography. Such a focus reveals not only who is represented in history and who is producing histories, but it also begins systematic analyses of the power structures that determine and contain rhetorical history.

James Berlin also argues for scholars to resist traditional notions of rhetoric and history, though in his contribution to the collection he explicitly suggests that such a shift will encourage scholars to seek out suppressed rhetorics:

The mission of the revisionary historian of rhetoric I have in mind is to resist the notion of rhetoric as a unified, coherent, and univocal collection

of texts stretching over time, texts that support either truth and virtue on the one hand, or error and vice on the other. The revisionary historian must instead locate the variety of rhetorics that exist at any particular moment and examine their interaction with each other and with the conditions of the production. This will require seeking out the suppressed rhetorics of women, workers, and other marginalized and silenced groups.

(“Revisionary Histories” 115-116)

What Berlin adds to revisionist historiography in this article is an argument for historians to pay careful attention to the particularities of material conditions and how they are influenced by larger power structures. This vision of revisionist historiography, which is closely attuned to the impacts of power structures, encourages “history from the bottom up” (123).

The revisionist historiography concept of developing histories of rhetoric from the bottom up had been developing for several years at the point of Berlin’s publication. In a 2005 retrospective overview of revisionist historiography, Richard Graff and Michael Leff break down revisionist historiography into two general “waves:” theory and system in the history of rhetoric, and critical historiography and rhetorical histories. Most important to this project is what they label the second wave, critical historiography and rhetorical histories, which is resonant with Berlin’s “history from the bottom-up.”

Typified by Thomas P. Miller’s call for the shift from the rhetorical tradition to “the rhetoric of traditions,” critical historiography and history from the bottom-up require a rigorous contextualization and localization of rhetoric (23). As Graff and Leff describe

it, critical revisionist historiography includes two basic moves: first, “it searches for biases and exclusions, for disguised tactics of repression and marginalization” (21); then, “it applies that critical sensibility to the act of writing history itself” (21). With the critical engagement with the rhetoric of traditions, “the focus shifts from defining a rhetoric or a system of rhetoric to the interpretation of the cultural exigencies that enable or encourage multiple modes of rhetorical response” (23). Such multiple modes, or rhetorics of traditions, displace the exclusionary power of a singular rhetorical tradition. As a result, all histories of rhetoric, even those that might have once fit into the canonical rhetorical tradition, are made to account for their cultural exigency and historical specificity. Some scholars aptly call this “social history,” an approach rooted in the everyday rhetorics of people, truly infinite with possible rhetorics.⁴

Of the different threads of revisionist historiography that engaged in history from the bottom up, feminist rhetorical historiography resonates most meaningfully for this project. In what follows, I introduce some of the important moments in the development of feminist rhetorical historiography. While I will not provide a comprehensive review of feminist rhetorical historiography, I will offer strategic coverage of key moments that are particularly important for this dissertation.

One of the earliest touchstone moments in feminist rhetorical historiography is the well-known debate between Speech/Communication scholars Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Barbara Biesecker, which occurred in print in 1992 and 1993. After Campbell’s 1989 publication of *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Biesecker published a response where she

⁴ For a detailed definition of the phrase “social history,” see Peter Stearns’ introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Social History*.

charged Campbell with an “affirmative action approach to the history of Rhetoric,” which perpetuated “female tokenism” (143-144). Campbell responded the following year in a piece bitingly titled “Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either,” where she defended her work as “just a beginning” (154). Biesecker responded again, explaining that while “the inclusion of women's rhetorics has done nothing less than begin to destabilize the subject of Rhetorical history that up to this point has been exclusively male,” it is also important to recognize that, “even as the list of ‘great works’ has expanded over time to include women’s rhetoric, the dominant features of that list have not changed” (238). This debate highlights some of the challenges that faced early feminist historiographers who grappled with the best approach to revising the male-dominated rhetorical tradition. Despite these challenges, scholars such as Patricia Bizzell spread their enthusiasm for this work; as Bizzell noted in 1992, “there is so much more to be done. Let’s do it!” (“Opportunities” 57).

A second touchtone moment in feminist rhetorical historiography was also a debate, though this time between Xin Liu Gale, Cheryl Glenn, and Susan Jarratt in a 2000 issue of *College English*. While this debate also includes some discussion about how to best revise the male-dominated rhetorical tradition, the key tension revolves around notions of historical truth. In Gale’s opening comments, she accuses both Glenn and Jarratt of distorting truth for their feminist agenda—of inventing and misrepresenting what can be known about Aspasia. Gale draws sharp lines between fact and fiction and describes Glenn’s scholarship as “a feminist fiction of an ancient woman’s life” (364).

Implicit in this critique is Gale's accusation that Glenn's scholarship lacks rigor and full evaluation of evidence.

In her response, Glenn describes all historical accounts as stories and she rebuts Gale by showing that the fact/fiction binary (equivalent to the true/false binary) misunderstands the postmodern project to "decouple the link between 'objectivity' and 'truth'" (387). This argument recalls Glenn's introduction to her book *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity Through the Renaissance*, where she argues that reality and truth are unattainable and, in fact, undesirable goals for rhetorical histories. She writes, "those of us charting historical maps know that we cannot tell the 'truth,' that no single map can ever tell the truth, that our traditional foundations are shaky, that maps are neither stable nor entirely coherent, and that the notion of capturing any 'reality' rings of empiricism, positivism, and naïveté" (5). Rather than seeking truth or reality, Glenn recognizes that histories "fulfill our needs at a particular time and place" (7). As such, histories are as much a reflection of our current moment and our current motives, as they are an account of the past.

Still, that does not mean that historians can disregard evidence and over-indulge the postmodern approach to history as always *just* story. Glenn suggests the following in her response to Gale:

[H]istoriography asks us to consider questions of knowledge (in what context is it produced and normalized? whom does it benefit?), ethics (to what/whom are these practices accountable? what/whom do they privilege?), and power (what practices might produce historical

remembrances? what are the effects of such representation?). At the nexus of these questions reside the issues of historical evidence: What counts? What is available? Who provided and preserved it—and why? How and to what end has it been used? and by whom? Thus history is not frozen, not merely the past. (389)

Glenn, like other feminist historiographers, encourages situated, contextual knowledge and historical evaluation that works directly against the possibility of historical objectivity. In the above passage, it is easy to discern the same revisionist historiography theme of challenging power structures, which Berlin and Vitanza (among others) advocated for many years prior. What this illustrates is both the interconnectivity between feminist historiography and the broader project of revisionist historiography, and also the specific uses to which feminists have applied major tenets of revisionist historiography.

In her interpretation of the debate between Gale, Glenn, and Jarratt, Patricia Bizzell argues that Gale's negative response to both Glenn and Jarratt's work might be the result of her feeling excluded from their emotions and their versions of feminism (11). According to Bizzell, Glenn and Jarratt's work demonstrates a departure from what Royster calls "practices of disregard," akin to objective approaches to history, which Gale seems to prefer (Bizzell 13). Bizzell calls our attention to the possibility that a reader's emotions can cause her to respond negatively to a researcher's disclosure of emotion. This cycle shows that even though many rhetorical historians now embrace the need for emotional self-reflection, it isn't a universally celebrated or welcomed practice, even among feminists.

In addition to these two major debates, several publications have marked seminal moments in the development of feminist historiography. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* published two separate special issues on the topic: the first, “Feminist Rereadings in the History of Rhetoric” was edited by Susan C. Jarratt and published in 1992; the second, “Feminist Historiography in Rhetoric,” was edited by Patricia Bizzell and published in 2002. In the preface to the first special issue, Jarratt challenges the category of “woman” as a static signifier, a challenge that may be read as a proto-transgender critique. She writes, “Influenced by [poststructuralist theories of language and of subjectivity], the essays collected here ask not ‘Who are the neglected women rhetoricians?’ but rather ‘How does gender give meaning to the organization and perception of historical knowledge?’” (“Performing” 1). This shift is critical because, as Jarratt argues, “If we all agree to appear under the banners of ‘feminism’ and ‘rhetoric,’ our words will attest to the pluralities of those nouns, resulting in not women’s history but feminisms’ histories” (“Performing” 2).⁵

While this initial special issue “advance[d] feminist work in the history of rhetoric along a different trajectory from the establishment of women’s history,” (Jarratt, “Performing,” 1), the second special issue of *RSQ* demonstrated the diverse possibilities that feminist historiography offers: a way to change the male-dominated canon (Jarratt); a method for both recovery and recuperation of women rhetors (Campbell); a challenge to privileged definitions of evidence (Enos); a necessary consideration of the intersections of gender and race in rhetorical histories (Wu); a continuous redefining of the dominant

⁵ This shift from “woman” to “feminist” that Jarratt models resonates with an argument that I forward in a recently published book chapter, “Queering Feminist Rhetorical Canonization.”

figures in women's rhetorics (Mattingly); and a gauge for evaluating truth claims (Sutherland). Richard Enos argues that by focusing exclusively on literary or "text only" sources, historians of rhetoric narrowly define what counts as evidence for women's rhetorics (68-69). He encourages feminist historians, then, to expand definitions of both primary research and evidence in order to enhance the materials available for rhetorical analysis. This shift to redefine what counts as evidence has been widely taken up by feminist historiographers, and, at its most basic level, the purpose of this move is to offset the influences of power in historiography and hegemonic deployments of truth (see Kates; Logan; Mattingly; Susan Miller; and others).

Alongside these major edited collections, individual scholars have published monographs that not only expanded the scope of feminist rhetorical historiography, but also deepened the governing theoretical frameworks. While I cannot review all of these texts here, I do want to discuss one that has had a particularly strong impact on my own thinking about feminist historiography—Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Traces of a Stream*. In the final chapter of her book, Royster names her methodological approach "afrafeminist methodology," which she explains "includes four sites of critical regard: *careful analysis*, *acknowledgement of passionate attachments*, *attention to ethical action*, and *commitment to social responsibility*" (279). All four of these sites are hinged on a subjective understanding of research. While earlier revisionist historiographers had already articulated some of these understandings of research, what makes Royster's articulation so profound is that it is both completely forthcoming and intentionally rooted in African American feminisms.

In addition to this overall contribution to feminist rhetorical historiography, Royster's explanation of passionate attachments importantly advances earlier discussions of the role of emotion in research. In particular, she writes,

An acknowledgment of passionate attachments reminds us that knowledge has sites and sources and that we are better informed about the nature of a given knowledge base when we take into account its sites, material contexts, and points of origin. My point here is that knowledge is produced by someone and that its producers are not formless and invisible. They are embodied and in effect have passionate attachments by means of their embodiments. They are vested with vision, values, and habits; with ways of being and ways of doing. These ways of being and doing shape the question of what counts as knowledge, what knowing and doing mean, and what the consequences of knowledge and action entail. It is important, therefore, to specify attachments, to recognize who has produced the knowledge, what the bases of it are, what the material circumstances of its production entail, what consequences or implications are suggested by its existence, and for whom the consequences and implications hold true.

(280)

This passage is worth quoting at length because Royster eloquently articulates the subjectivity of knowledge production. Rather than ignoring or downplaying such attachments, Royster encourages researchers to engage with this aspect of the research process.

One final contribution that feminist historiographers have made to revisionist historiography that is important to note here is the application and expansion of the specifically postmodern element of revisionist historiography. Michelle Ballif defines postmodernism as “the (non)framework” that does three things: “(1) acknowledges the complicity of reason and the metaphysics of presence with systems of oppression, (2) demonstrates the phallogocentric construction of truth and subjectivity, and (3) attempts to move beyond, or at least resist, the Hegelian dialectic and the conventional dualisms of Western thought” (21). Like Vitanza’s third category of Sub/Version, Ballif uses postmodernism as a feminist method of deconstructing conventional dualisms, or binaries, that limit what counts as rhetoric and/or history.

While feminist historiographers have made these important contributions to revisionist historiography, there has not (yet) been a parallel production of queer rhetorical historiography in Rhetoric and Composition. However, within Speech/Communication, Charles E. Morris’s 2007 edited collection, *Queering Public Address: Sexualities in American Historical Discourse*, includes several contributions that mark an initial emergence of queer rhetorical historiography. As Morris explains in the introduction, there are “many challenges and exhilarations of an endeavor that finds us grappling at the intersection of rhetoric, history, and queerness; grappling with the historically situated cultural performances, politics, and meanings, including our own, of the ‘good queer speaking well’ and of queer sexuality as a prism for the study of public address” (2).

Perhaps because it is necessary to confront these challenges, several chapters of this collection strike a tone of defiance and obstinate political investment. In Dana L. Cloud's "The First Lady's Privates: Queering Eleanor Roosevelt for Public Address Studies," for example, Cloud argues that "To make the discussion about whether someone simply is, or is not, queer is overly simple; further, it fails to ask what someone's being queer means and does in the public sphere. In theory and public culture alike, making the question [of queerness] personal rather than political is an ideological strategy of containment" (31). This line of argument showcases queer theory at its best—an analytic which is not merely personal, but a political and ideological interruption of the dominant public sphere. Though Cloud's focus is historical, she provides a poignant example of the ways that queer rhetorical historiography can use rhetorical theory to make history intensely relevant in the contemporary moment. Other chapters in the collection—particularly Karen A. Foss' "Harvey Milk and the Queer Rhetorical Situation: A Rhetoric of Contradiction," Morris's "My Old Kentucky Homo: Abraham Lincoln, Larry Kramer, and the Politics of Queer Memory," John M. Sloop's "Lucy Lobdell's Queer Circumstances," and Eric King Watts's "Queer Harlem: Exploring the Radical Limits of a Black Gay 'Utopia'"—continue to exemplify the rich possibilities that queer rhetorical historiography offers, particularly by showing how historical queerness can inform and further contemporary queer theory.

Speech/Communication scholars have also produced some scholarship particularly focused on transgender identity and experience that might be read as initial explorations of transgender historiography. John M. Sloop's article in *Queering Public*

Address, “Lucy Lobdell’s Queer Circumstances,” argues for a historical recovery of Lobdell as a transgender figure. He writes, “although it is clear that Lucy Lobdell could not be ‘transgendered’ because no such category existed, I am putting in a bid here to collect him as transgendered” (162).⁶ Sloop’s earlier book, *Disciplining Gender: Rhetorics of Sex Identity in Contemporary U.S. Culture*, is also focused on transgender topics. As he explains, “the purpose of this book is to provide critical readings of several contemporary cases of sexual/gender ambiguity in order to emphasize, and ultimately struggle with, the gender and sexuality norms that ‘America’ stands for, that each of us learns to protect through our language and our behavior toward one another and toward our ‘selves’” (2).

While Sloop’s book isn’t positioned as historiography, *per se*, it does productively contribute to conversations on queerness in rhetorical studies and it provides a critical reading of recent queer/transgender pasts. Sloop’s overarching thesis as he analyzes the cases of John/Joan, Brandon Teena, k.d. lang, Janet Reno, and Barry Winchell, is that, “rather than each case acting as an example of ‘gender trouble’ that encouraged reassessment of cultural assumptions about human bodies and sexual desire, such cases were more often positioned within the larger body of public argument as aberrations in nature’s plan and hence worked to reify dominant assumptions about human bodies and sexual desires” (2). The problem with this logic is that it falls into the same trap that Jay Prosser critiques Judith Butler for using: “transgender = gender performativity = queer =

⁶ The use of the word “transgendered” is a highly debated topic within transgender communities. As Valentine explains in relation to his project, “some informants...objected to the ‘ed’ suffix, arguing that ‘transgendered’ carries a similar (and negative) connotation to the construction ‘colored’ in speaking about people of color” (25-26). I personally chose to use “transgender” as both a noun and an adjective, thereby avoiding use of “transgendered” altogether.

subversive" (29). When the figures Sloop studies become legible as properly gendered or sexual subjects, they lose their queerness (e.g. he argues with respect to k.d. lang that “no longer do her ‘drag’ and her sexual ambiguity trouble audiences; now her stably signified androgyny helps make lang appealing to everyone” (98)). Again, while I do think this book productively contributes to conversation on queerness in rhetorical studies, Sloop makes his arguments at the expense of large parts of queer and transgender communities. The broader contribution of Sloop’s work, however, is that he usefully illustrates the challenges and complexities of engaging with queer and transgender topics within a rhetorical studies framework.⁷

Though I have given them separate attention, these discussions of queer historiography in Speech/Communication and feminist historiography in Rhetoric and Composition are intertwined with the larger trajectory of revisionist historiography. While revisionist historiography has proven to be an expansive and continually growing area, and it has been variously called revisionist, critical, new, and constructionist historiography (and I am sure several other names), revisionist historiography does contain a dominant theme—it treats history as ideological, contingent, and contextual. Graff and Leff usefully summarize revisionist historiography when they explain that, “at minimum, we no longer can assume that the history of rhetoric consists in a stable, neutral record open to disinterested inquiry” (12). In short, revisionist historiography pushes historians of rhetoric to recognize history as *story*.

⁷ Though I do not have the space to thoroughly engage them here, there have been other contributions from Speech/Communication that begin to consider transgender topics, including Isaac West’s “Debbie Mayne’s Trans/scripts: Performative Repertoires in Law and Everyday Life.”

This is a critical body of work for my dissertation because in recognizing the necessarily subjective quality of history, we can begin to identify the ways that power is at work in history and in archives. Feminist rhetorical historiography is the area of revisionist historiography that has the most relevance for this dissertation because it models a critique of the ways that power differentials impact histories related to particular groups of people. As Sharon Crowley poignantly writes, “the illusion of ideological neutrality is a luxury available only to those who espouse a dominant ideology” (15). At its best, revisionist historiography works to identify and destabilize the role of power in the production of history, and it is in this same spirit that I offer my analysis of transgender archiving.

The Archival Turn in Rhetoric and Composition

As one of the more recent methods of revisionist historiography, rhetorical analysis of archives continues and extends revisionist historiography’s interest in the ways that power works in the production of history. Archives have often been figured as sites that contain historical “truth,” which is a primary tool of objective history writing. By showing that the writing of history can never hope to be objective, revisionist historiography has made way for new understandings of the role of archives and archival evidence in historical research. This has inspired a practice of treating archives as the

subject of research, or what I am here calling the archival turn in rhetorical studies.⁸

While this trend did not surface independent of the broader archival turn in the academy and other disciplinary engagements with archives, I will here focus on the archival turn in rhetorical studies and I will consider the broader treatments of archives in the subsequent section.

In our discipline, specific discussion about archives first began to surface when scholars such as Linda Ferreira-Buckley expressed concern about the role of primary research in scholarship. Ferreira-Buckley's first articulation of this concern was in the second Octalog, where she explains that much work in the field undervalues primary research and researchers fail to serve their time in the painstaking process ("Octalog II" 26). She argues, "...we must make archives our starting point, for failing to do so weakens both our historical accounts and our theorizing. Ten years ago our histories were undertheorized; today I fear they are underresearched" ("Octalog II" 28). Ferreira-Buckley elaborates on this same fear two years later in "Rescuing the Archives from Foucault" when she again encourages scholars in Rhetoric and Composition to return to the archives. She suggests that "what we need is the kind of archival training graduate students in history undergo, training tailored to recovering the history of rhetorical practice and instruction" (577). Embedded in this suggestion is the critique that

⁸ I am following Charles E. Morris III's argument from the 2006 *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* forum on "The Politics of Archival Research" where he titled his opening statement "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies; Or, The Archive's Rhetorical (Re)Turn." While I will discuss this forum at greater length below, it's important to note the I am directly drawing on Morris's language and agreeing with his claim that it has been a recent trend for scholars in rhetorical studies to examine the rhetoricity of archives. Though we often distinguish the disciplines of Rhetoric and Composition and Speech/Communication, for this section of my literature review I am drawing on both disciplines under the larger banner of rhetorical studies. I have chosen to do this not only because the archival turn is a relatively small body of work even including both disciplines, but also because these conversations have been truly cross-disciplinary.

rhetoricians are not skilled researchers. While other scholars have reiterated this sentiment elsewhere (Brereton; Enos “Recovering”), Ferreira-Buckley’s articulation is the most closely tied to archives.

The 1999 “Archivists with an Attitude” forum in *College English* where Ferreira-Buckley’s “Rescuing the Archives from Foucault” was published appears to be the first major collection of articles in the field that critically analyzes archives. In addition to Ferreira-Buckley’s article, there were pieces by John C. Brereton, Stephen Mailloux, and Thomas P. Miller and Melody Bowdon. Mailloux offers the concept of “rhetorical hermeneutics” to explain a rhetorical approach to archiving. Specifically, he claims that “‘certainty’ is relative to rhetorical context” as he traces the influence of typos in historical documents, showing that archives can actively resist researchers (589). Mailloux consequently calls for researchers to be aware of their own interpretive power in the archives. Mailloux (and the forum as a whole) advocates for rhetoricians to treat archives as changeable, open to interpretation, and intentionally and contextually constructed; in short, to treat archives as rhetorical.

Miller and Bowdon’s contribution to the forum is an argument for the conceptual and methodological shift from a focus on the Rhetorical Tradition to the rhetorics of traditions. This in some ways reiterates the claims made in Miller’s earlier publication that I’ve already discussed, but in this article he and Bowdon apply this concept to archives. They write, “With the transition from the Rhetorical Tradition to the rhetorics of other traditions, historians are reinventing archival methods because the definition of archives as depositories of public record became problematic when we recognized the

limitations imposed on ‘the public’” (592). Challenging the constitution of “the public” importantly undercuts archival hegemony, and, I would argue, is the first step in dismantling archives as systems of unchecked control of history.

Also published in 1999 was an important article by Wendy B. Sharer titled “Disintegrating Bodies of Knowledge: Historical Material and Revisionary Histories of Rhetoric,” which clearly links revisionist historiography to a critical investigation of archiving. Sharer writes,

The historian must also examine the practices that determine the active inclusion of certain materials in archives and library collections, and the exclusion of other materials...In addition to examining the opportunities for archival research and its potential benefits for future histories of rhetoric, researchers should consider both the materiality of the objects from which we might derive “new” knowledge, and the physical construction of collections containing these bodies of knowledge. We cannot afford to ignore the various material processes—acquisition, appraisal, collection management, description, indexing, preservation, oxidation, and deaccession—that affect the corpus of historical records on which we may be able to construct diverse and subversive narratives to challenge previous, exclusionary accounts of rhetoric. (124)

Sharer acknowledges that her advice does encourage our discipline to wander into the territory of library and information science (136), but she convincingly argues that revisionist historiography already suggests that pathway. By focusing on materiality as a

major thread in rhetorical historiography and a significant dimension of archiving, Sharer suggests that scholars in our field are not as far removed from archival analysis as we might believe.

Several years later, in 2006, a forum titled “The Politics of Archival Research,” was published in *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*. The forum as a whole attempts to remedy Morris’s observation that “the archive itself...has yet to be subjected to sustained critical-rhetorical reflection by scholars in this discipline” (113). All five contributions draw on a notion of the archive as a rhetorical construction, which leads to claims about the archives as having agency, as facilitating particular relationships with texts, as containing and disseminating ideology, and as “scenes of invention.” Morris summarizes this approach as a departure from seeing the archives as “passive receptacles for historical documents and their ‘truths,’ or a benign research space” (115). Instead, this approach indicates that archives constitute “a dynamic site of rhetorical power” (115). This recognition leads Cara A. Finnegan to make the broad-sweeping argument that all rhetorical scholars, before they can engage in the contents of the archive, “need to critically engage the archive itself” (118).

One way to critically (and rhetorically) engage archives is to consider organizational structure and systems of classification. As Morris notes in “Archival Queer,” the ideologies and politics of an archive can be particularly salient in the handling of queer records. He writes, “In addition to access restrictions, the very pietistic process of categorization and indexical naming—what Derrida called ‘consignation’—serves to deflect queer inquiry, as at the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe, where only self-

identified lesbians are labeled as such because, as an archivist bitinglly said to Estelle B. Freedman, ‘We don’t say that about anyone without proof’” (146-47). While this overtly shows how classification labels can directly reflect the view of particular archivists, whom Helen Freshwater rightly calls “conduits between the past and the contemporary public” (734), it certainly happens in more nuanced and mundane ways as well, that without critical reflection, would go unnoticed. In Derrida’s principle of consignation he also implies that within the logic of collection, there is no room for heterogeneity or secrecy, which would threaten the (imagined) unity of the documents (3). Again, while queer archiving might provide an obvious example of the complicated ethics involved in this practice, Morris illustrates that such questions could be productively asked of all archives.

Barbara A. Biesecker’s article in this *RPA* forum, “Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention,” insists on the historicity of the archive (“its merely appearing to be present in an ontic sense, as material proof of the past” (124)). Because of this historicity, she argues that rhetoricians are particularly poised to write rhetorical histories of archives:

[S]cholars of persuasive speech have not yet begun robustly to engage the entailments of the archive’s irreducible undecidability even though we are *uniquely* positioned to do so, given that the deconstruction of ‘fact’ or of referential plentitude does not reduce the contents of the archive to ‘mere’ literature or fiction (this is the most common and silliest of mistakes) but delivers that content over to us as the elements of rhetoric. Indeed, from

the *historicity* of the archive, rhetorics; out of the deconstruction of the material presence of the past and, thus, in relation to what the archive cannot *authenticate* absolutely but can (be made to) *authorize* nonetheless, issues an invitation to write rhetorical histories of archives, which is to say, critical histories of the situated and strategic uses to which archives have been put. (130)

Biesecker's focus on archives as rhetorical constructions is a clear outgrowth of revisionist historiography in that it resists "fact" (or "truth") and instead favors a historicizing and contextualizing of archival research and archival knowledge production (revisionist historiography favors the same things for the writing of history). Susan Miller briefly makes a similar claim in arguing that a document's "archival locale" influences how a researcher encounters it ("Writing" 46-47).

In 2008, Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan co-edited a collection titled *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process*, which is the first book publication in rhetorical studies that "marks the change from reading an archive not just as a source but also as a subject" (Schultz xii). Many of the chapters encourage an expanded and more complex notion of archiving, specifically through discussions of serendipity and chance in the research process (Gold; Kirsch). These authors discuss how chance encounters and fruitful redirection often take place in our lives outside of the archive and in turn influence our research process. Other chapters expand the definition of archive by arguing for a treatment of *place as archive*, such as focusing on the hometowns of early women writers as an archive (Sutherland).

Wendy B. Sharer and Malea Powell discuss archival research experience as being specific to a particular location, and for both of them, they conducted research that was physically painful. Sharer recollects her “...stiff neck and the headache I had developed while squinting at the microfilm images as they whizzed by on the projection screen” (51). Powell adds another dimension of what can be a painful archival research process as she reflects on her emotional pain; she writes, “As I sat there and thought about empire, I started to get very cold—felt myself grow puny and insignificant in the face of imperialism and shivered at the impossibility of it all—me, an Indian, a mixed-blood, here in this odd colonial space” (120). Perhaps worse than a passing stiff neck or headache, Powell’s visceral response to her archival research is a result of her being surrounded by imperialism in a colonial space.⁹

Powell explains why such attention to space is important: “My point here is what it feels like to be in an archive, not because I think you care about how *I* feel but to illustrate the ways in which meaning is sometimes held captive by the body and how we have to then walk through story to make sense of our experiences as writers, scholars, and as humans” (117). Powell suggests that we combat this potential for information captivity with stories. Continuing the revisionist move to treat all histories as stories, Powell explains that she offers her story “to respectfully mark the possibilities that we can all bring to light for one another through story, to raise the questions that came out of that encounter” (123). Powell’s story is a productive one for readers because she teases

⁹ I’ll return to this rich quotation in chapter three when I discuss the profound influences that the politics of an archive can have on researchers.

out the gatekeeping function of archives, which happens through specialization of archival knowledge and research skills:

Access required knowledge of a very specialized type: how to find and identify documents within catalogs and holdings lists and finding guides, and to do so in such a way that your simple request would pass unimpeded through the system's many gatekeepers; how to fill out forms, pay for things, use the physical space of the archive—all of these an elaborate maze each time I visited someplace new, all designed to keep the knowledge safe, protected, away from the prying eyes of the uninitiated and the uninformed. (116-117)

Unlike many of the excited stories we might hear of a researcher's process of discovery and surprise in an archive, Powell illustrates that some researchers experience the archive as a control mechanism, or what Achille Mbembe calls a "status" (20). In addition to their facilitation of access to historical records, archives function to protect and preserve, which necessarily involves exercises of power over how materials can be accessed, for what purpose, and by whom, thereby conferring a status onto those documents that are deemed archivable. While for some researchers these power structures may seem like reasonable inconveniences, to others they are prohibitive. Through Powell's story telling, she refutes and refigures the official narrative of official archives, denaturalizing many archival practices that are taken for granted.

Given this necessary influence of power in archiving, the privileging of some historical subjects over others, the question, whom are archives for?, becomes

increasingly important for Powell, and I would argue, for rhetorical studies more broadly. In Powell's piece she quotes Qwo-Li Driskill who writes, "The archival project was not created *for* Indians. It was created to consolidate knowledge *about* Indians. And yet, here I am, an Indian in the archive" (117). This prompts us to ask several important questions: How often are archives created for non-hegemonic histories? Are archives designed for users who are not part of the dominant classes?¹⁰ How often are archives read against the grain of their intended purpose? What can be done to mitigate the influence of power in archiving? While I am not suggesting that answers to these questions would show that archives overwhelmingly favor dominant classes, I believe that both Power and Driskill prompt larger questions about the design and role of archives in relation to power structures.

Another contribution to *Beyond the Archives'* theme of expanding the definition of archive and challenging the hegemonic power of archival institutions is Wendy B. Sharer's chapter in which she encourages researchers to seek out "the materials hidden under the beds and in the attics of friends and family" (55). By considering such sites as sources for archival materials, Sharer dislodges institutional archives as the singular source for research material. Of course, such alternative sites provide their own challenges, such as knowing where materials are and gaining access to them. But Sharer's larger point is that historical materials do not need to be sanctioned by official archives in order to be available and worthy of scholarly attention. This shift might also help

¹⁰ I mean "dominant classes" in the broadest sense of that phrase including everything from gender, sexual, class, ability, race and other forms of social domination/subordination.

researchers such as Powell and Driskill escape from the colonial environment of institutional archives, though it may not be a sustainable long-term resolution.

Beyond looking for archival materials in new places for the rhetorics of traditions, a rhetorical approach to archiving can also include reading against the grain and speaking back to traditional archives. Speaking back to the archives is a way to “resist the imperialist discourse...and to connect to communities and cultural memory that reside outside of the traditional archives” (Kirsch and Rohan 6). As rhetoricians have called for continued expansions of the concept of “archive,” they simultaneously encourage the destabilization of traditional knowledge and archival practices. Like the discussion of the historical record that I began with, the rhetoric of traditions can be found through speaking back to traditional archives, both through overt analysis and through research-based publications. We can understand both Driskill and Powell’s continued use and publication about archives that were created *about* Indians as a way of speaking back, a refusal to be excluded from the imperialist archival project.

One final aspect of a rhetorical approach to archives that is offered in *Beyond the Archives* is an evaluation of a researcher’s ability to conduct archival research. In “Stumbling in the Archives: A Tale of Two Novices” Lisa Mastrangelo and Barbara L'Eplattenier candidly share their own learning curve, common to many first-time archival researchers in rhetorical studies. In a familiar narrative, they write:

Neither of us had any specific training in archival work. We just wandered in one day, sat down at the table, and started thumbing through boxes and boxes of old dusty, tattered papers. We had none of what John Brereton

says historians need—the ‘combination of paleography and the appropriate languages and...working knowledge of the relevant online and print bibliographies’ (575) that makes archival work so much easier. We knew little of the archives available to us and had little understanding of how archives function or how to work effectively with archivists. (161)

This disclosure is probably one that many rhetoricians can identify with, and it is an important one. However, this account does overlook an important step in the research process—interactions with archivists. Between wandering into an archive and thumbing through materials, all researchers engage with archivists and/or staff, which is a largely overlooked yet critical step in the research process. Still, Mastrangelo and L’Eplattenier’s tale prompts important questions: how much work in the field is influenced by low-level archival literacy? How would rhetorical histories change if we had some of these skills?

Just one year after the publication of *Beyond the Archives*, Southern Illinois University Press released a second edited collection, *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*, which functions as a companion volume for the earlier publication (though it isn’t positioned as such). *Working in the Archives* is focused on the “pragmatics of doing archival research” and the book is an extended answer to the question, “*What do I do* [in the archives]?” (Ramsey et al., 4). With this publication, scholars in rhetorical studies now have a rich resource guide that walks a person through an entire archival research process. The collection covers four basic areas: general information for using archives, accessing archives, working with archival materials, and creating the archive as research process. I appreciate what I see as

the goal of this collection, which is not to simply enable rhetoricians to write *better* histories, but to encourage rhetoricians to take seriously our own archival literacy and examine the ways that it influences our research.

In the September 2009 issue of *College English*, Barbara E. L'Eplattenier explicitly separates archival methods and methodologies. She writes, "Some readers will say that we do talk about methods, and they point to works that theorize the researcher's stance, ideological bias, and definitions of rhetoric; the non-neutrality of historical presentations; the plurality of histories; or the theoretical constructs that inform our work" (68). But, as L'Eplattenier explains, that work is actually about methodologies, not methods. She continues,

Vitally important to the development and construction of any research project, methods are the means by which we conduct our research, how we locate and use primary materials, and for historians, how we recover materials for our histories. Methods are about achieving access to information, about finding aids, about reference materials, about archive locations and restrictions, about the condition of the materials, about the existence of evidence or the lack of evidence, and about the triangulation of information—all of the factors that impact our "systematic method of gathering evidence" and our interpretation of that evidence, our presentation of our revisionist histories (à la Miller). Just as methodology allows us to theorize the goals of our research, methods allow us to

contextualize the research process or the researched subject and materials.

Methods make the invisible work of historical research visible. (69)

This description of archival methods importantly extends the definition used in *Working in the Archives* where archival methods are characterized as the “pragmatics of doing archival research.”¹¹ For L’Eplattenier, archival methods are also about questions of evidence, achieving access, the conditions of materials and other factors that impact gathering and interpreting of historical materials. This understanding of archival methods is far more than “what do I do in the archives?” because it takes into consideration larger questions about both the individualistic processes of archival research and the influences of the structural elements of archives.

It is through this definition of archival methods that I see my own analysis of transgender archiving contributing to this archival turn in rhetorical studies. While this review of the archival turn in rhetorical studies has by no means been comprehensive, I have provided strategic considerations of some of the major publications to illustrate where my analysis of transgender archiving develops from and to show how my research contributes to conversations on archiving in rhetorical studies.

The Broader Archival Turn

As I mention earlier, the archival turn in rhetorical studies has not happened independent of the broader archival turn in the academy and particular disciplinary engagements that critically analyze archives. While it would be impossible for me to

¹¹ Since L’Eplattenier was one of the co-editors of the *Working in the Archives* volume, I interpret her argument in this article not as a contradiction to the introduction, but rather as an extension and deepening of the notion of archival methods.

account for all of these literatures, I do want to call upon some of the more prominent discourses on archives from fields other than rhetorical studies.

In the humanities, most contemporary studies of archives are influenced by Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever*. One of the greatest (and most cited) contributions of this text is Derrida's attention to the etymology of the term "archive":

...the meaning of "archive," its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. (2)

The continuing relevance of this etymology is twofold: it calls attention to the materiality of archives, their location in a specific space, and it highlights the power inherent in the archival project. Like the Greek archons, whoever creates the technical structure of an archive has immense power because he/she/ze determines what is archivable, or what is

worthy of historical record.¹² Derrida writes, “the technical structure of the *archiving* archive also determines the structure of the *archivable* content even in its very coming into existence and in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event” (17).

While I could spend an entire dissertation tracing the influences of Derrida on the study of archiving, it’s important to indicate that he wasn’t the catalyst for the archival turn. As historian Ann Stoler explains,

Among historians, literary critics and anthropologists, archives have been elevated to new analytic status with distinct billing, worthy of scrutiny on their own. One might be tempted to see this as a Derridian effect of the last decade that followed on the publication of *Archive Fever*. But the archival turn has a wider arc and a longer durée. *Archive Fever* compelling captured that impulse by giving it theoretical stature, but Jacques Derrida’s intervention came only after the “archival turn” was already being made. (44).

To provide some historical context: *Archive Fever* was published in 1998 (though it was originally a lecture delivered in 1994), the archival turn in rhetorical studies that I trace above fully gained traction just a few years later, and as Stoler explains, the broader archival turn had already been in motion prior to the late 1990s. While rhetorical studies

¹² “Ze” and “hir” are gender-neutral pronouns that grammatically replace he/she and his/her, respectively. As Susan Stryker explains, “Given that the English language doesn’t allow us to refer to other individuals without gendering them (we have to choose between ‘he,’ ‘she,’ or ‘it’ with the latter not considered appropriate for reference to humans precisely because it doesn’t indicate a gender), some transgender people favor the use of newly-coined, ‘gender-neutral’ pronouns” (*Transgender* 21). I will use variations of the constructions ze/he/she and hir/him/her throughout this dissertation in order to intentionally include transgender individuals who prefer gender-neutral pronouns.

scholars such as Morris have rightly claimed that “the archive itself...has yet to be subjected to sustained critical-rhetorical reflection by scholars in this discipline” (“Archival” 113), that claim is not necessarily applicable to other disciplines.

One of the disciplines that has produced a series of sustained critical reflections on archives is, not surprisingly, History. Similar to rhetorical historiographers, historians have argued that “archives themselves [are] artifacts of history” (Burton, “Introduction,” 6), that scholars should do “ethnographies of the archive” (Ghosh), and that the discipline should move from treating “archive-as-source to archive-as-subject” (Stoler, qtd in Arondekar 15). I have been deeply influenced by this thread of historical scholarship, including books such as Ann Stoler’s *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Antoinette Burton’s *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India*, Carolyn Steedman’s *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, and Anjali Arondekar’s *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India*, among others.

Of the insightful work on archives in the discipline of History, I am most indebted to Antoinette Burton’s edited collection *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and The Writing of History*. As a whole, the collection functions to historicize archives, which Burton defines in the introduction in the following way:

...interrogating how archive logics work, what subjects they produce, and which they silence in specific historical and cultural contexts; enumerating the ways in which archival work is an embodied experience, one shaped as much by national identity, gender, race, and class as by professional

training or credentials; pressing the limits of disciplinary boundaries to consider what kind of archive work different genres, material artifacts, and aesthetic forms do, for what audiences and to what ends; recognizing, and accounting for, the relative evidentiary weight given to sources of various types and what Suvir Kaul calls “the play of rhetorical difference in each archive”; and not least, imagining counter-histories of the archive and its regimes of truth in a variety of times and places. (9)

I anticipate that scholars in Rhetoric and Composition will find this description of historicizing to be quite similar to what we might call a rhetorical analysis of archives. What Burton establishes in this introduction, and what is evidenced throughout the collection, is that archives themselves have a great deal of “rhetorical difference” and, moreover, researchers have very individualized experiences in them.

To take just one example of what this lens accomplishes, Durba Ghosh’s chapter provides an insightful and nuanced analysis of her encounter with colonial archives. She tells the story of her interaction with archivists, whom she refers to as “gatekeepers,” as she explains that “the people I encountered attempted to discipline me into writing a history that resonated for them” (39).¹³ The story she ends up telling, critical as it is of the (attempted) influence of the archive and archivists, was certainly not the history that resonated with the archive and archivists. Instead, her experience taught her that while she read the archives, the archives were reading her (30).¹⁴ The importance of such an

¹³ This is deeply resonant with Powell’s account, which I described above.

¹⁴ This is something I have also experienced while I conducted my own research. Particularly since my project is focused on the archives themselves, it was not terribly surprising to me that I would feel pressure to produce a particular portrait of the archives.

approach to archives is that it highlights the very real exchange of power that happens in an archives.

In addition to these humanities-based approaches to archives, it is also important to acknowledge the field of archiving itself, where many archivists are both practitioners and theorists/scholars. To better acquaint myself with this field, I participated in a graduate-level seminar on archiving offered by the Syracuse University School of Information Studies. Though I have now familiarized myself with some of the conversations in this field and I recently published an article in the Canadian archivist journal *Archivaria*, I am still respectfully aware that, “The archival profession is actually far more diverse than it may appear to non-archivists, and the differing orientations of, for example, archival educators, manuscript curators, and government, academic, and corporate archivists can lead to sharply drawn and deeply felt division with regard to issues of practice and theory” (Kaplan 218). Thus, the few threads from the field of archiving that I wish to point out here and those that I will take up later in my dissertation are merely small facets of much larger and more elaborate conversations.

One of the important lessons I have drawn from the field of archiving has been that many archivists are shifting from traditional approaches to archival work to critical reflections on their subjective role in shaping the historical record. As Elisabeth Kaplan explains, “the vast majority of American archivists still approach their work with a nineteenth-century-style positivism, viewing themselves in Jenkinsonian terms as the objective guardians of a naturally occurring historical record—this despite the ubiquity of so-called postmodern discourse over the past two decades, despite, really, the intellectual

and philosophical tenor of the entire twentieth century!” (217). While her frustration with this trend is clear, she also explains that since the 1980s some archivists have embraced a new approach to appraisal/selection that, “accepts the subjectivity of the whole process, as of history itself, and argues for an active, conscious, and self-conscious role for the archivist as co-creator of the historical record, as active shaper of the future’s past, understanding archives as the problematic representations they are, and recognizing and striving to understand the power (and responsibility) that that implies” (216-217). This line of inquiry has obvious relevance for the archival turn in the academy given the central role that archivists play in the shaping of archives. Kaplan’s final argument is that, “The point is not simply to study archives, but to increase the consciousness of practicing archivists, and to illuminate and improve practice” (219). For Kaplan, the intellectualization of the field is a key component to improving practice.

Since the field of archival studies can be very practice-oriented, some archival scholars have expressed frustrations with theorizations of the archive that seem too far removed from archival practices. Richard J. Cox, for example, objects to Derrida’s abstraction of archives:

While we are beginning to find more interest in archives by historians of culture and memory, many of these studies stretch their definition of archives far beyond how we have approached our work (either stimulating us to rethink how we define the term and our work, or burying a more literal sense and the importance of archives so far into postmodernist

jargon as to give us little to compare with or relate to our work and mission). (400)

As a scholar outside of the field of archiving, I see Cox's critique of Derrida as an example of the ways that some archivists are actively engaged in humanities-based theorizations of the archive and are seeking out cross-disciplinary exchange. Such critiques have also inspired me to maintain an orientation to the practical elements of archiving and to carefully balance theorization with application.

Another lesson that I have taken from the field of archiving has been to consider what James M. O'Toole calls the "symbolic significance of archives." O'Toole's theorization of the symbolic significance of archives prompts several important questions: "When does the true significance and meaning of a record derive less from what appears in its surface text and more from its symbolic standing-in for something else? Are there cases in which records contain practical information, but in which the real significance is larger and more symbolic?...When is the act of recordmaking more important than the record that is made?" (51). These questions point to larger concerns about the role of archives in the creation, dissemination, and preservation of cultural memories. Though this dissertation does not directly intercede in theories of cultural and public memory, I continually allude to the idea that the transgender materials and archives I consider have far more significance than the particularities of single records or collections.

While there is much more scholarship in the field of archiving that importantly contributes to the archival turn and that informs this dissertation, I am limited in this

space to the truncated discussion I have provided. I would only add that there have been two books that I have particularly drawn on while shaping my understanding of archiving—the first is a collection edited by Randall C. Jimerson titled *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice*, and the second is Gregory S. Hunter’s *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives*.

Transgender Archiving as Revisionist Historiography

In that foundational 1987 issue of PRE/TEXT, James Berlin states that “in arriving at revised versions of the history of rhetoric, two projects must be attempted: a critique of the histories that have so far been written and a theoretical description of the histories that ought to follow” (48). Now that I have laid out the work of revisionist historiography and the archival turn in Rhetoric and Composition, I can turn to how this dissertation is an example of “the histories that ought to follow.”

In his important article, “My Old Kentucky Homo: Abraham Lincoln, Larry Kramer, and the Politics of Queer Memory,” Charles E. Morris III explains that, “The story of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender historiography cannot be told but as one of struggle against discipline, a term that designates not only an academic field but the rhetorical efforts, often cloaked as ‘objective’ praxis and judgment, which preserve hegemonic constructions of sanctioned domains of inquiry into the past” (105). As a whole, this dissertation works against “hegemonic constructions of sanctioned domains of inquiry into the past” via two fronts—by treating archive as rhetorical constructions and by focusing on the particularities of transgender archival methods and logics.

This dissertation is a sustained and close examination of the practices of transgender archiving. My overarching argument is that archives are rhetorical institutions that actively shape people's various encounters with the transgender past. Archives are rhetorical in the ways that they collect, preserve, classify, and make accessible historical materials. Furthermore, archives facilitate complex rhetorical interactions between researchers and historical materials through structural elements such as environment and proximity and through descriptive elements such as classification systems.

As my point of departure, I use Antoinette Burton's definition of archives, which is: "traces of the past collected either intentionally or haphazardly as 'evidence'" (3). The idea of the archival "trace," partial and evasive fragments of the past, is particularly poignant for transgender communities who need to fight for self-representation. My project focuses on transgender archiving as a way to access the rhetorics of the tradition of transgender identities, politics, and epistemologies. Investment in archives has been one way that transgender people have organized to assert control over history and representation. It is thereby important to ask, what counts as evidence of transgender lives? How or why does "truth" matter in transgender archiving?

The archiving of transgender materials, as distinct from LGB/queer archiving, warrants specific attention because even grassroots LGBT archives are not immune to social hierarchies of exclusion. As with all archives, "Marginal archives often preserve materials excluded from the mainstream repositories but are themselves no less constructed than mainstream archives, and are likewise the product of process of both

preservation and exclusion” (Hamilton, Harris, and Reid 11). In other words, LGBT archives enable a privileging of certain histories that inevitably brings some historical subjects to the fore while others are considered outside of the collecting scope, if they are considered at all. Transgender archiving provides a productive site for analyzing this double layer of resistance—resistance to both LGB-centered archives and non- or anti-queer archives more broadly. This does not mean that transgender archiving possesses a singularly redemptive quality, or that it is free from its own biases. On the contrary, one aspect of my analysis includes a consideration of the power hierarchies at work within archives which can privilege particular factions of transgender communities by more thoroughly representing those factions in archives. In Derrida’s terms, transgender archives offer an interrogation of the claim that every archive is at once institutive and conservative, revolutionary and traditional (7).

As an interdisciplinary project, this dissertation engages with several disciplines including Rhetoric and Composition, Speech/Communication, Queer Studies, Transgender Studies, Information Science/Archival Studies, and History and Memory Studies. Though my primary disciplinary focus is Rhetoric and Composition, I participate in these other disciplines in that I both draw on their scholarship and hope to offer them new and provocative ideas. While I have read extensively in each of these areas, I have intentionally curtailed my engagement with this scholarship in the data chapters. My data chapters foreground my original empirical research and still, I have far more data than I have been able to include in this dissertation. Readers will find that there are many places throughout my data chapters where useful connections could be made to the various

disciplines that this dissertation engages, though have not accounted for each of these connections.

This dissertation's primary contribution to the field of Rhetoric and Composition is to add a book-length text to the archival turn in rhetorical historiography and draw our field's attention to transgender concerns. I am simultaneously interrogating and drawing from work in rhetorical historiography that disrupts the edification of archives as *the* source of truth and fact, as the origin of objective history. Even the simple claim that archives are rhetorical ruptures any idealization or possibility of historical "truth" that can be simply found in archives. I hope other scholars will continue to build on the archival turn by contributing book-length studies, not just small parts of other scholarship or short articles in forums devoted to the topic, on the rhetoricity of archives. The study of archival rhetoric and the practice of historicizing archives could become a disciplinary trend in its own right.

Rather than turning to historians for archival training, as Ferreira-Buckley suggests, this dissertation shows that studying rhetoric prepares us to interrogate archives as rhetoricians. Rhetoricians can use our understanding of language and persuasion to read archives rhetorically. In future work in the history of rhetoric, scholars might more frequently reflect on their experiences in the archives, not just as novice or expert researchers, but as rhetorical researchers who navigate the archives in ways that could show disciplinary techniques and strategies. Like Biesecker, I believe that rhetoricians are "*uniquely* positioned" to interrogate the historicity, and thus the rhetoricity of archival practices.

Just as feminist rhetorical historiography has used strategies of recovery to challenge the male-dominated rhetorical tradition, this dissertation recovers the neglected practices of transgender histories and contextualizes them within a rhetorical framework. I am indebted to the critical examinations of historical research methodologies that feminist historiographers have been developing for several decades. This dissertation builds on this foundation by moving into the archives and dealing specifically with archival research methodologies. As feminist historiographers, we might begin to examine not only the emotions that a researcher brings to a research site/subject, but also the emotions that the research site may bring to the researcher. While I focus on the particular practices of transgender archiving, I anticipate that my approach and findings will be useful for feminist historiographers (and rhetorical historiographers more broadly) who wish to investigate the archival practices of other marginalized and oppressed communities.

In many ways, this dissertation will challenge the lineage of rhetorical historiography that I have traced above, which still has relatively little queer work. Given the visibility of LGBT communities and scholarship, it continues to surprise me that so little work has been done in Rhetoric and Composition in this area. While composition scholars such as Jonathan Alexander have offered a great deal to our discipline's understanding of queer students/studies in the classroom, I have yet to encounter similar work on queer rhetorics in Rhetoric and Composition. This minimal work on queer rhetorics and the complete absence of work on transgender rhetorics provides an opportunity for this dissertation to introduce some ideas on what the rhetorics of queer/

transgender traditions might look like. Like the countless rhetorical historiographers whom I follow, I can imagine no better place to begin this project than the archives.

Overview of Dissertation

This dissertation comprises six total chapters. Following this introductory chapter, chapter two, “Definitions, Methods, and Methodologies for Investigating Transgender Archiving,” begins with definitions of the terms “queer” and “transgender.” I then explain some of the ethical and material complexities involved in doing work on transgender history, particularly as it is distinct from lesbian, bisexual, or gay histories. The remaining sections of the chapter address the methods I used to collect data on each archive, the methodological underpinnings involved in that process, and some reflection on the interpretation and use of that data.

Titled “Queer Politics of Resistance and the Shifting Landscape of Grassroots LGBT Archives,” chapter three provides an introduction to the practice of LGBT archiving and offers rhetorical histories of each of the three archives that are the focus of this study. These rhetorical histories serve two purposes: they give background information on the archives, and they illustrate the political contexts that produce queer and transgender archiving. I characterize the three archives as “shifting landscapes” because they involve changes in naming, political function, access technologies, and geographical location and focus. In recognizing that all archives are shifting landscapes, archival users will be better equipped to conduct and contextualize their research.

Chapter four, which is titled “Desiring Queer Archival Logics: Organization, Technologies, and the Complexity of ‘Access,’” considers the logics of each archive, meaning the philosophy about how materials should be gathered, maintained, and accessed. Two of the most critical aspects of archival logic are the organizational technologies that an archive uses and the space it occupies, both of which directly shape how materials can be accessed in the three archives I studied. In this chapter I complicate what it means to have “access” to transgender archival materials by arguing for the importance of environmental accessibility, which is shaped by things like pronoun usage, visible representations of transgender people, and the language use within descriptive systems. I conclude this chapter by flipping the traditional logic that access to archival materials should be efficient and satisfactory, and instead offer the hypothesis that frustration and delayed archival access may produce interesting and productive archival research as well.

In chapter five, “Affective Encounters in the Archives,” I build on the significant body of queer historiographical scholarship to consider the different ways that contemporary researchers affectively encounter the transgender past in archives. As Ann Cvetkovich explains in *An Archive of Feelings*, the “idiosyncrasies,” or the “queerness” of lesbian and gay archives is an urgent response to traumatic collective history, a response that catalyzes the creation of radical archives of emotion (242). Perhaps more than other archives, LGBT archives prompt strong responses and passionate attachments for researchers who work there, which I argue is also largely influenced by a researcher’s proximity to archival materials. The role of touch—the ability to have contact with

historical materials—is the basis of my argument in this chapter that contemporary encounters with the transgender past are both highly unpredictable and often deeply affective.

I end this dissertation with a brief conclusion chapter that takes a panoramic view of the contributions that this study offers to Rhetoric and Composition and other disciplines. I also suggest some new pathways that my future work on transgender archiving may take in order to account for the influence of the digital age on transgender archiving.

Chapter Two

Definitions, Methods, and Methodologies for Investigating Transgender

Archiving

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview and explanation of my research methods and methodologies and to introduce readers to the key terms and ethical dimensions of my research area. I will begin with some definitional groundwork—historicizing and contextualizing the key terms in this project, principally “transgender” and “queer.” Next, I will unpack some of the complexities that arise in doing transgender history. Though this dissertation is not a transgender history *per se*, it does examine transgender historiography, and, in doing so, I necessarily face all of the same complexities and ambiguities that are part of the making of transgender history. In the final sections, I explain how I selected the three archives, how I collected data, and how I interpreted and incorporated the data that I had collected.

Before I begin, I want to quickly explain my use of “archive” both with and without an “s.” Though it may be common for the archival profession to use the word “archives” to represent both the singular and plural (e.g., “an archives,” and “all of the archives”), I have chosen to use “archive” as a singular (e.g., “a grassroots archive”) and “archives” as a plural (e.g., “in the three archives”). I am using these distinctions to be more consistent with disciplinary norms in Rhetoric and Composition, and I have done so to cause less confusion for readers of this dissertation.

Defining “Transgender” and “Queer”

“Transgender” is a young term. Many scholars trace its origins to the late 1980s and Virginia Prince, a person who felt that she neither fit the category of transsexual (someone who permanently changes their sex through medical intervention) or transvestite (someone who episodically wears the clothing of the “opposite” sex).¹ She coined the term “transgenderist” as a noun to describe people who are neither transsexual nor transvestite, but instead are people who “permanently changed social gender through the public presentation of self, without recourse to genital transformation” (Stryker “(De) Subjugated” 4). In the early 1990s, Leslie Feinberg reshaped the term from a noun to an adjective in the influential pamphlet *Transgender Liberation: A Movement Whose Time Has Come* and expanded the definition to include any number of people who faced gender oppression. This was the birth of the contemporary usage of “transgender” as an umbrella term.²

Susan Stryker offers a current and concise definition in her recent book *Transgender History*: “I use [transgender] in this book to refer to people who move away from the gender they were assigned at birth, people who cross over (*trans-*) the boundaries constructed by their culture to define and contain that gender” (1). She continues, “it is *the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place*—rather than any particular destination or mode of transition—that

¹ For more on the origins of transgender, see Stryker’s “(De)Subjugated Knowledges” and Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors*. Also, Robert Hill’s dissertation argues for a more complicated history, usefully summarized by Valentine, page 261 n.1.

² Stryker traces the shifting definition of “transgender” to Holly Boswell’s 1991 article “The Transgender Alternative” (*Transgender* 123). Though Boswell’s article predate’s Feinberg’s pamphlet, many still credit Feinberg with popularizing the more expansive definition of the term, perhaps because of the wider circulation and future publication of the pamphlet as a book.

best characterizes the concept of ‘transgender’” (1). This definition demonstrates the expansiveness of “transgender”—it does not only apply to those who are transsexual (“people who feel a strong desire to change their sexual morphology in order to live entirely as permanent, full-time members of the gender other than the one they were assigned to at birth” (Stryker *Transgender* 18)). Instead, “transgender” includes anyone who crosses the gender boundaries they were born into.

Jean Bobby Noble usefully complicates this definition of “transgender” by illustrating the significance of the prefix “trans-”:

...the prefix *trans-* itself captures what we imagine are various kinds of sex and gender crossing, and various levels of permanence to these transitions, seemingly to signify everything from the medical technologies that transform sexed bodies, to cross-dressing, to passing, to a certain kind of “life plot,” to being legible as one's birth sex, but with a 'contradictory' gender inflection, “trans” is rapidly becoming a free-floating category, signifying its own discursive history as much as any, all, or, at times, none of the above. (2)

Beyond Stryker’s definition, which emphasizes gender crossing, Noble shows that there are many layers to “transgender”—it has a complex discursive history and is in constant motion. Noble argues that “at its most provocative, *trans-* and the space it references refuse the medical and psychological categorical imperatives through which it has always been forced to confess” (3). Part of the anti-categorical nature of “transgender” is the seemingly endless litany of categories that fit under it, hence the popular umbrella metaphor that invokes the expansive and embracing nature of the term.

In this dissertation, I use “transgender” as both Stryker and Noble explain it—as a term that describes those who cross the boundaries of their birth-assigned gender and as a “free-floating category” that resists “categorical imperatives.” I want to note, however, that “transgender,” like many terms I favor in this dissertation, is most often used to describe the experiences of white transgender people (Stryker *Transgender*). As Stryker argues, there is a “seemingly inexhaustable global catalog of specialized terms for gender variety [that] shows how impossible it really is to group such a wide range of phenomena together under the single term ‘transgender’ without keeping that word’s definition very flexible and without paying close attention to who is using it to refer to whom, and for what reasons” (*Transgender* 23). David Valentine’s *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* makes a similar observation from his ethnographic research in New York City. He writes, “while I have argued above that I do not want to reduce this analysis to race, age, or class, my concern here finally is that the young, the poor, the people of color who are understood as being transgender are increasingly having to unknow what they know about themselves and learn a new vocabulary of identity” (135).

I understand both Stryker and Valentine to be cautioning against uncritical uses of “transgender,” uses that do not account for the power of the term to speak for some and to force onto others a “new vocabulary of identity.” If we recall Noble’s discussion of “trans” as a “free-floating category” that resists “categorical imperatives,” the idea of “transgender archiving” becomes slightly oxymoronic. How can a free-floating anti-category be categorized and archived? If “transgender,” in its most expansive and inclusive sense, is truly anti-categorical, how can archives purport to account for

transgender experience without redefining transgender in a narrow and exclusive way? How do archives deal with the system of privilege/oppression inherent in the term “transgender”? Do archives have the power to challenge the term “transgender,” which has the capacity to do socio-linguistic violence to particular groups of people? These are the types of critical tensions around the term “transgender” that I will keep active throughout this dissertation. Although I will follow popular use of “transgender” as a catchall, a so-called umbrella term, I try to be acutely aware of the ways the term works to privilege some while oppressing others.

I hope that by asking questions such as these, I will encourage scholars in Rhetoric and Composition to begin to examine the stakes involved in any archival project, particularly the archiving of transgender materials. Also, given that scholars in Rhetoric and Composition have not engaged with transgender scholarship or communities, I hope that this dissertation might begin to provoke a much-needed “trans-ing” of the discipline, encouraging scholars to examine the gender dimorphism that is invisibly, but powerfully at work.

“Trans-ing” the discipline also involves a greater attention to the critical and political utility of “queer,” which as I discussed in the opening chapter, has also been neglected in Rhetoric and Composition. The word “queer” shares a somewhat parallel history with “transgender”; it also only came into common usage fairly recently, similarly hitting its stride in the mid-1990s. As Stryker explains, there’s a crucial connection between “transgender” and “queer”: “...*transgender* can in fact be read as a heterodox interpretation of *queer*, that it is a conceptualization of queerness based on the

understandings of people who can contest naturalized heteronormativity in ways that might include, but are not limited to, homosexual orientation or object choice” (“Transgender Issue” 149). Transgender can be queer in that it exposes the constructed naturalization of heteronormativity, or really any sexuality that is based on stable object choice. To be oriented to a moving object or from a moving position, as transgender demands, is certainly queer.

But let me take a step back to define “queer.” Perhaps the most often cited definition of “queer” comes from the introduction to Michael Warner’s *Fear of a Queer Planet*, published in 1993. He explains, “‘queer’ gets its critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual” (xxvi). In other words, “queer” does not simply signify a non-heterosexual *identity*, as may be common parlance. “Queer,” as it is used in queer theory and as it will often be used in this dissertation, is an anti-normative *analytic* that enables critiques of normativity. Though queer as an analytic may be particularly attuned to the influence of heteronormativity, is certainly not limited to that.

In the introduction to a special issue of *Social Text* titled “What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?”, the editors open with a brief historical contextualization for the term “queer”:

Around 1990 *queer* emerged into public consciousness. It was a term that challenged the normalizing mechanisms of state power to name its sexual subjects: male or female, married or single, heterosexual or homosexual, natural or perverse. Given its commitment to interrogating the social processes that not only produced and recognized but also normalized and

sustained identity, the political promise of the term resided specifically in its broad critique of multiple social antagonisms, including race, gender, class, nationality, and religion, in addition to sexuality. (Eng, Halberstam, Muñoz 1)

As a retrospective look at the political promise of the term “queer,” I am struck by the editors’ list of multiple social antagonisms where sexuality is the last to be mentioned, as if it almost didn’t need to be mentioned at all. This discussion of queer further captures its utility as an “engaged mode of critical inquiry” (3) that challenges interconnected “mechanisms of state power,” and, I would add, other forms of power as well.

In an issue of *GLQ* published a few years later, Tom Boellstorff usefully points out that though “queer” is used to challenge dominant power structures and various normativities, it can never fully escape the dominant paradigm of normalcy. As Boellstorff explains, “The term *queer* itself marks this stance of being always already within, in bed with, complicit and contaminated by, the normative with which it engages” (241). The reason for this is because something is “queer” precisely because it isn’t normal. So while “queer” can be a strategic analytic, and scholars such as Halberstam can use it to refer to “nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” (6), Boellstorff cautions theorists to remember that it isn’t outside of the logic of dominant systems of power. “Queer” can be anti-normative and non-normative, but it can’t ever be outside of a relationship to the normative altogether.

To slightly complicate this description of “queer” as an analytic rather than an identity, I should note that in many cases “queer” does provide a useful label and

adjective. “Queer” can describe many people and/or practices that would otherwise be lost in an acronym of any length.³ The acronym LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) is an identity-based model for clustering people together and it encourages lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender to be read as singular identity categories.⁴ As I show above, “transgender” is now often used as an adjective rather than a noun, and the same is also true for “queer.” Therefore, I use “queer” throughout this dissertation to include the many people, practices, and materials that fall outside or complexly within LGBT.

I should further note that even the acronym LGBT is not standardized—it is often used in other orders, which each represent particular politics. For example, some transgender organizations may rewrite the acronym as TBGL, thereby flipping the hierarchy of terms. In my experience, the order of this acronym may even have a loose relationship to geography. As someone who was raised and educated on the east coast, I am more familiar with LGBT. While I was living in Colorado and studying an archive in California, I more often encountered the acronym as GLBT. Indeed, the name of the San Francisco archive studied in this dissertation is the GLBT Historical Society. When I use some version of acronym in this dissertation, I use “LGBT” as the default but when I am referring to a specific archive or place, I aim to be consistent with local uses. When I use “queer” to describe archiving more generally, I mean it to include both the LGBT

³ For more about identity politics involved in the movement between queer and LGBT, see Stryker’s *Transgender History*.

⁴ There are many other initials often added to this list including I(intersex), Q(queer), Q(questioning), and A(allies), culminating in the impossible LGBTIQQA, which some have rightly dubbed “alphabet soup” (Stryker *Transgender* 21).

archives I am studying and other archives that might be considered “queer” but not LGBT.⁵

The Politics of Studying Transgender

Though my project focuses on transgender archiving, not transgender people *per se*, I still rely on transgender subject matter and I am therefore entangled in the same power structures that any academic study of an oppressed group faces. Transgender people are a marginalized and oppressed population and it is critical to situate myself in relation to this topic.

In the few years that I’ve been engaged in transgender studies, I’ve come across many critiques of academic transgender scholarship. Most of these critiques are from transgender individuals who distrust the academy, who have grown leery of speaking for all transgender people, and who are tired of being used by the establishment without seeing any real change. Of all these critiques, none has touched me so deeply as a recent blog post revealingly titled “Fuck You and Fuck Your Fucking Thesis.” In this post addressed to “Mr. or Ms. Grad Student,” male-to-female author “Anne,” LiveJournal username “tagonist,” articulates what I have come to see as common objections to academic research on transgender people. Among many important points, Anne writes, “I’ve probably helped as many non-trans people finish grad school as I’ve seen trans women friends commit suicide...Am I supposed to ignore that imbalance and keep pushing you wankers along?” (tagonist). This power imbalance that Anne identifies is the

⁵ I am counting The Sexual Minorities Archives as an LGBT archives, but it is very intentionally named “sexual minorities” in order to break out of the limits of acronyms of any length. I’ll discuss the naming of archives process in more detail in chapter three.

crux of the complicated politics of studying transgender topics from within an academic framework.

There are two online guidelines that advise researchers working on transgender topics—Eli Green and Lore M. Dickey’s “Considerations for Research with Trans Subjects and Communities” and Jacob Hale’s “Suggested Rules for Non-Transsexuals Writing about Transsexuals, Transsexuality, Transsexualism, or Trans_____.” In both articles, the authors implore non-transsexuals to conduct humble, self-reflexive, and respectful research. While it may be historically true that most unethical research on transgender people has been conducted by non-transgender people, that does not make transgender researchers exempt from ethical responsibility merely because they are part of the community. In fact, the authors’ suggestions in these two articles represent solid research practices, whether or not a researcher is transgender or transsexual.

Though I am a transgender researcher, I am still in a position of privilege in relation to the transgender materials and people I research because I am white, highly educated, and able to pass in my chosen gender (among other privileges, doubtlessly). As I’ve worked with local transgender youth who fight homelessness and struggle to secure their most basic rights, I am acutely aware of the immeasurable privilege I have to even write about my privilege. And so I take Anne’s polemic and the advice offered by Hale and Green and Dickey quite seriously. Their collective wisdom includes advice to locate yourself as a researcher, interrogate your own subjectivity, use language (very) carefully, approach your topic with humility, refuse to exoticize your subjects, contextualize your research, recognize the plurality and heterogeneity of transgender communities, give

voice to transgender people whenever possible, and recognize the multiple identities and related oppressions of transgender people. These suggestions are also quite resonant with feminist methods. Much of this advice I actively use throughout this dissertation as evaluative tools in my analyses of transgender archival practices. For example, I attend to archival language and intersectionality in an attempt to understand how transgender archiving works for many facets of transgender communities, not merely the most privileged transgender people.

My biggest concern with the politics of my research is that I focus on archival institutions, which are always already sites that inherently privilege particular groups of people. As I will explain in the subsequent section, transgender history is not an apolitical enterprise and the execution of it at an institutional level in archives is always necessarily rife with politics. I have attempted to anticipate this by considering grassroots archiving in conjunction with more institutional sites, but this compensation can never fully erase the fact that attention to transgender history and archiving is a luxury that many transgender people who struggle to survive simply cannot afford.

Trans + History = ?

Defining “transgender,” as I have done above, is a straightforward enough task in theory. But when we apply that definition to a concrete practice, it becomes much more challenging. When we attach “transgender” to history, for example, it provokes a lot of very important questions. For starters, have transgender people always existed? This is a version of the question that gay and lesbian historians have been addressing for

decades—“have gay people always existed?” Contemporary historians, particularly those studying gender and sexuality, often face the challenge of constantly evolving language practices. Anachronistic labeling is always a concern for historians, but perhaps even more difficult is the challenge of the changing ways that identity is understood. Before the past decade ushered in extensive (though often not positive) transgender visibility in the U.S., many gay and lesbian historians strongly argued that particular historical figures who we might now call transgender were actually lesbians or gay men.

If we look back to one of the earliest U.S. gay and lesbian histories, Jonathan Katz’s *Gay American History* from 1976, we find clear evidence that the divisions between gay/lesbian and transgender history have always been blurry and contentious. In the beginning of his section on passing women, Katz claims, “Despite their masculine masquerade, the females considered here can be understood not as imitation men, but as real women, women who refused to accept the traditional, socially assigned fate of their sex, women whose particular revolt took the form of passing as men” (209). At the time that he wrote this, Katz was making a genuine effort to be a feminist scholar and include women on equal ground with men.⁶ Yet to present-day transgender readers, Katz’s insistence that passing women were *real* women would likely seem transphobic. Perhaps those “passing women” were actually transgender men who did not have access to the technology to transition or to discourse a that would aptly express their male identity. Perhaps they were inhabiting a male identity out of desire, or emotional need, rather than economic gain. Yet at the same time, Katz’s work inspired future transgender historians

⁶ So much so, in fact, that the table of contents has a female sign (♀) for every section that has “substantial references to women-loving women,” done in order to make lesbian material easier to locate and less subsumed under male homosexuality (viii).

such as Leslie Feinberg, despite what may seem like transphobic historiography (see Feinberg 22).

There are countless examples like this where gay and lesbian history and culture have intersected with transgender history and culture in ways that might seem like border wars. Yet such border wars are a relatively recent phenomenon. “Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century,” Stryker writes, “homosexual desire and gender variance were often closely associated” (*Transgender* 34). The concept of “inversion” marked the convergence of homosexual desire and gender variance since “a man who was attracted to men was thought to be acting like a woman, and a woman who desired women was considered to be acting like a man” (Stryker *Transgender* 34). This quick translation of sexual desires (“a woman who desired women”) into gender performance (“acting like a man”) was the logic that generated the category of “invert.” Whenever a person demonstrated non-normative sexuality, gender, or sex (“anatomy, morphology, and physiology”), it “always implied a totally disordered system called ‘sex-inversion’” (Rubin “Logic” 482). Our contemporary identity categories that neatly parse out gender from sexual orientation would not have made sense in the early part of the twentieth century.

While the era of the “invert” aptly illustrates the longstanding blurriness between gender and sexual orientation categories, contemporary transgender scholars seem to agree that transgender people have always existed. Leslie Feinberg, for example, argues in *Transgender Warriors* that “...there appears to have always been gender diversity in the human population” (121). Stryker echoes this argument: “...transgender phenomena seem

to be a pretty persistent part of human culture across time and around the world” (*Transgender* 24). Despite the seeming ubiquity of transgender phenomena, there are only two texts that I would identify (without caveat) as transgender histories—Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors* from 1996 and Stryker’s 2008 *Transgender History*.⁷

Both authors claim that theirs is neither an exhaustive nor comprehensive history. For Feinberg, hir book “is a fresh look at sex and gender in history and the interrelationships of class, nationality, race, and sexuality” (xi). Meanwhile Stryker’s book “focuses instead on the collective political history of transgender social change activism in the United States—that is, on efforts to make it easier and safer and more acceptable for the people who need to cross gender boundaries to be able to do so” (2). Taken together, these two texts provide an excellent starting point for anyone interested in transgender history.

For Feinberg in particular, the purpose of writing transgender history is very political. Ze writes, “It is time for us to write as experts on our own histories. For too long our light has been refracted through other people's prisms. My goal in this book is to fashion history, politics, and theory into a steely weapon with which to defend a very oppressed segment of the population” (*Warriors* xii). Transgender history, then, has two purposes for Feinberg: first, to allow transgender people to be experts on our own history; and second, to serve as a weapon against transgender oppression. Jason Cromwell adds a third function of transgender history, explaining, “Nearly all transpeople in searching for

⁷ Though much has been written about transgender people in the past, I am distinguishing here those texts that are written from a transgender perspective. Transgender people are discussed in many media (autobiographies, memoirs, sociological and psychological studies, documentaries, websites, academic texts, and others) in both positive and negative ways. But in very few places is transgender history written from a transgender-positive perspective. For a list of transgender resources, see Stryker’s *Transgender History*, 158-164.

their identities turn to the past” (92). While this trend may not be as pandemic as Cromwell claims, his point that history can be a source for identification and identify affirmation is an important one. Taken together, these three functions provide a persuasive case that transgender history is indeed a personally and politically useful tool.

Despite these examples of ways that history has been politically useful for some transgender people such as Feinberg, others strongly resist transgender history because of its potentially negative effects. For example, Cromwell’s work on transmen and FTMs includes an interesting discussion on the many transmen and FTMs who don’t identify with historical transgender figures (92-100). What Cromwell calls “nonidentification” can happen when histories conflate transsexuality and homosexuality, when they focus on people who are on the feminine side of the transgender spectrum, or when language is used inaccurately. One of Cromwell’s research participants demonstrates “nonidentification” when he prickles at the phrase “passing women” (which, as I’ve explained above, was often used by gay and lesbian historians to describe historical figures we might now call transgender): “...I’d identify more strongly with them if they were called passing men. I’m a man who was born female, in this sense, I pass as a man not as a woman” (93). This quick movement between historical figures (“them”) and the speaker (“I”) illustrates how the process of identification works for contemporary transgender people turning to history for reflections of themselves. And if it is true that “nearly all transpeople in searching for their identities turn to the past” (qtd. above), nonidentification may have serious consequences for contemporary transgender people who are searching but fail to find themselves in history.

For some trans people, history also has the power to betray a carefully created contemporary identity. Transgender people often undergo changes to consciously craft their gender presentation, and sometimes, “Individuals retell their experiences, effectively rewriting their histories as mistakes or ‘detours’ in order to fit themselves within the categories most useful to them” (Rubin *Self* 142). These choices may then render some transgender people vulnerable to being “outed” as transgender. An excellent example of this negative power of history is the life and historical recovery of Dr. Alan Hart. In a chapter that I recently wrote for a forthcoming edited collection, I discuss Dr. Alan Hart’s relationship to history and archiving at length (“Archive This!”). To summarize, Dr. Alan Hart was born in 1890 and was assigned female at birth. Hart later underwent a hysterectomy (one of the first known sex-change surgeries in the United States), and began living full-time as man (Devor 32). An accomplished medical doctor, Hart died in 1962 and requested in his will that his body be cremated and selected documents be destroyed. In his final requests, it seems that Hart was attempting to erase any evidence of his transsexual past, any proof of his being born into a female body.

Yet his transsexual history did not die with him. Less than twenty years after Hart’s death, Katz claimed him as a “passing woman,” as “clearly a Lesbian, a woman-loving woman” (277). Katz’s rendering of Hart’s history also included his own interpretation of Hart’s “elective” hysterectomy: “Since there was obviously no likelihood [*sic*] of [Hart] becoming pregnant, her[*sic*] desire to be sterilized clearly expresses her need to neutralize guilt about Lesbianism, to legitimize for herself her socially

unsanctioned relations” (278).⁸ This appropriation of Hart as a lesbian historical figure and the attribution of his surgery to internalized homophobia may very well have been what Hart was trying to protect against in his final wishes.

Given this complex portrait of transgender history, it seems clear that transgender history is neither always a positive force for change nor a harmful force of unwanted outing. The same is also true of transgender archiving, as a conduit of transgender history. By recognizing that such responses to history are present in transgender communities, I hope to both inform my own ideological approach to transgender archiving and give revisionist historiography still another way to rethink the our approaches to history.

Selecting Three Archives

I began the process of determining the specific archives I would study in the fall of 2007. Though transgender materials are collected globally, there are no listings of the major collections of transgender materials. As a consequence, my selection of three archives for this study was an approximate practice that began by my trying to learn about as many collections as possible. I found in my searches that very few collections have what I would consider “sizable” or “significant” holdings of transgender materials.⁹ Given what I knew about transgender collections, I listed the following as possible collections that I would study:

⁸ It should be noted that Katz’s use of “she” pronouns contradict Dr. Hart’s chosen male identity and pronouns. Katz’s description of Hart’s hysterectomy as “sterilization” further illustrates his subjective interpretation of Hart’s life.

⁹ What I am referring to as “sizable” or “significant” is a *highly* subjective measurement. I searched for collections where a commitment to collect transgender materials was both clearly stated and seemingly upheld. I was made aware of collections by online and word-of-mouth publicity.

1. Cornell University's Human Sexualities Collection: Ithaca, NY
2. The GLBT Historical Society: San Francisco, CA (hereafter GLBT Historical Society)
3. The New York Public Library: New York, NY
4. The ONE Institute: Los Angeles, CA
5. The Sexual Minorities Archives: Northampton, MA (hereafter SMA)
6. The University of Ulster's Trans-Gender Archive: Londonderry/Derry, Northern Ireland
7. The University of Michigan Library's National Transgender Library and Archive: Ann Arbor, MI (hereafter NTLA)

Though there are other collections that I am now aware of that may have been part of this list, I was not aware of them at the time and these seven were the ones that I considered at the beginning of this project.¹⁰

Since seven archives are far too many for an in-depth study, I decided to narrow my focus by evaluating the archives based on the following questions:

- Have transgender people been historically involved in the collecting of the transgender materials in this collection?
- What is the setting of this archive?
- Where is this archive located and can I research there?

The first question, have transgender people been historically involved in this archives, immediately narrowed my options to five archives, at least to the extent that I was aware

¹⁰ Other archives include the Transgender Foundation of America Archives (Houston, TX), the Kinsey Institute Library and Special Collections (Bloomington, IN), and various online and digital archives.

of transgender participation. Since I know of only one current transgender curator (Bet Power of the SMA), I considered archives that had transgender involvement at some point in their history. There were five archives for which I could confirm this criterion: the GLBT Historical Society, the ONE Institute, the SMA, the Trans-Gender Archive, and the NTLA. This question was the primary evaluation for me because I am aware of and sensitive to the troubling history of intellectual violence that transgender people have faced from non-transgender people and I wanted to work from within transgender communities as much as possible. I wanted to learn about transgender archiving from transgender people whenever feasible.

These five archives could be roughly categorized into four types of institutions: university-based collections, professional non-profit collections, library collections, and grassroots residential collections. While both the GLBT Historical Society and the ONE Institute are professional non-profit collections, I decided to use the GLBT Historical Society for this study because of their cooperation with the San Francisco Public library, where several major collections are held. I (correctly) anticipated that this would be a good opportunity for me to see how transgender materials were being used in a public library setting without studying an independent public library collection, such as the one at the New York Public Library.

Once I had narrowed my search to four archives (GLBT Historical Society, SMA, Trans-Gender Archive, NTLA), I turned to my final evaluative criterion: where is this archive located and can I research there? The GLBT Historical Society is located in San Francisco, CA, and the SMA is in Northampton, MA, which meant that I had

representation from the two coasts of the United States. Of the two institutional archives that remained on my list (the Trans-Gender archive and the NTLA), I was most attracted to the Trans-Gender archive because I had found evidence that it was the earliest collection of transgender materials that was initiated under the category of transgender. Furthermore, it would also have added transnational scope to my project. As I spoke with other researchers and attempted to contact the archivists, however, I learned that the archive is in a state of hiatus, awaiting its move to a new institutional setting. For the purposes of this project, then, I was unable to still consider it as a possibility. Fortunately, as I learned more about the NTLA, I found that it nicely complemented the GLBT Historical Society and the SMA: it was an archive started in Georgia by a transgender activist and it was later moved to Michigan, thereby traversing part of the mid-United States.

Once I had settled on three archives—the SMA, the GLBT Historical Society, and the NTLA—I began to understand them along a continuum of institutionality (Figure 1).

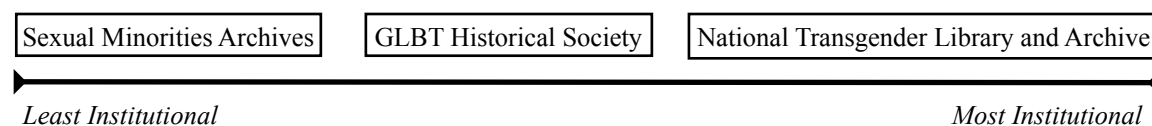


Figure 1: Continuum of archival institutionality.

Though I will provide rhetorical histories of each archive in chapter that follows, it will be useful here for me to explain the basic differences among the three archives. As this figure illustrates, the SMA is the least institutional collection: it is run by an individual

who is not responsible to any other board or funding sources and who makes all governing decisions independently. The SMA has the smallest operating budget, with a very small income generated from donations (which are not required to use the collection). Furthermore, it is located in a private residence, which means that as long as the archivist has a living space, so too will the collection. Taken together, these qualities make the SMA a fully grassroots archive—it is a community-centered and maintained collection.

Next in the continuum is the GLBT Historical Society, which has a board of directors and three full time staff people including a full time archivist. It relies on both grants and donations (the vast majority of its funding is from grants) and is housed in the organization's rented space. The governing body of the archive, the staff and board of directors, make decisions about the collection as a group and at times they report back to their funding sources about how their money is being spent. Though this archive began as a fully grassroots archive in the private residence of a collective member, it has developed into a non-profit organization that falls in between a grassroots and a university archive.

Finally, the NTLA represents the most institutionalized of the three archives. Housed within the University of Michigan's library system, the NTLA does not require any specifically dedicated funding—besides the initial cost of moving and processing, the collection only requires the regular hours for use and continued preservation of the materials, which are instated for all of the other special collections holdings as well. The NTLA has been woven into the fabric of the library's other collections and no longer

requires any explicit funding. To my knowledge, little or no continuing decisions need to be made about the collection because it is fully processed and not actively expanded.¹¹

In focusing on these three archives, I seek to make no claims that these archives represent the entirety of transgender collecting in the United States. Materials related to transgender people are collected in a wide variety of places and archives are only one of them. It seems that for transgender people who do pursue medical and hormonal options, for example, there is a particular drive to generate documentation of the process. While some of these personal archives are made available online, the vast majority are private and may or may not be available to researchers prior to or after death. I mention this to call attention to the necessarily limited amount and type of materials that are available in archives of any degree of institutionality. Still, the three archives that I selected include a fabulous array of transgender materials.¹² These three archives work particularly well in juxtaposition to provide a multi-dimensional portrait of contemporary practices of transgender archiving. In order to thoroughly study the collection and use of transgender materials in these three archives, I used a mixed-methods approach, which I detail in the following section.

Data Collection: Methods and Methodologies

Some of the rhetorical scholarship that has been most compelling to me has been that which deconstructs the seemingly normal and everyday. Ralph Cintron's *Angels'*

¹¹ To say that the NTLA does not actively collect somewhat simplifies the current situation. In chapter three I will spend more time discussing the current state of the NTLA and their collecting policies.

¹² Appendix A provides a table quantifying archival contents, as available. Though I was unable to gather statistics that explicitly quantify the transgender materials, this table will provide readers with a good sense of the size and type of holdings that each archive contains.

Town: Chero Ways, Gang Life, and Rhetorics of the Everyday is one such study. In this book, Cintron identifies his project as investigating the “rhetorics of public culture” and the “rhetorics of everyday life,” which means that he is “interested in the structured contentiousness that organizes, albeit fleetingly, a community or culture” (x). Similarly, my interest in transgender archiving is a critical investigation of archiving as an aspect of public culture that is too often taken for granted as everyday life. Like Cintron’s immersion in a particular Chicano/a community, I attempted to immerse myself in three particular archives, as a researcher of the archives themselves, in order to critically examine the rhetorical foundations that are at work within them.

As I reviewed in the first chapter, there is a growing body of scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition that critically considers the function of archives; this scholarship collectively represents an archival turn in the field. The dominant method in this approach has been for scholars to examine their own research processes and practices. Following this model, I went to each of the three archives and conducted my own research. Though I did not have very specific outcomes in mind (e.g., to find the papers of a particular person), as would most researchers, I inductively entered archives looking for transgender materials, broadly understood. I did a variety of catalog searches and made use of any available finding aids to arrive at transgender materials from many different entry points. It was important for me to get a sense of how each archive worked, so I spent more time searching around in them than actually reading materials. This is an important distinction between my own archival experiences and those of a more traditional researcher, even those within the archival turn in Rhetoric and Composition.

Typically, a researcher would spend the bulk of his/her/hir time reading the materials that were specifically sought. But since I was studying the archives themselves rather than the contents, I intentionally focused my attentions on the process of my research more than any particular archival materials.¹³

The materials that I spent the most time with were the ones that documented the history of the collections, which I found very helpful. At the SMA, the records of the original organization, the New Alexandria Lesbian Library, provided useful insights about the founding exigency and politics of the archive. The GLBT Historical Society maintained a newsletter, with variable numbers of issues per year, since June of 1985. By reading this newsletter from 1985 until the present, I was able to learn a great deal about the organizational changes and the shifting place of transgender materials in the collection. At the NTLA, I was again able to find materials that documented the history of the collection, and, in particular, I made use of the materials regarding the donation process.

At each archive I tried to spend at least a week researching within the collection. Largely because of convenience, I was able to visit the GLBT Historical Society and the SMA on two separate occasions, whereas I travelled to the NTLA only once.¹⁴ My research was also informed by several days that I spent in the Cornell Human Sexuality Collection, also searching for transgender materials. While I would have liked to have

¹³ There were several exceptions to this, of course, when I became engrossed in materials and would read them for hours in much more detail than my project warranted. Most memorable among these exceptions were the two days that I spent at the San Francisco Public Library reading Lou Sullivan's diaries.

¹⁴ The SMA is just a few hours away from Syracuse and marks the half-way point of my drive to visit my family in Connecticut. Though San Francisco is quite far away, about seven months after my first visit to the GLBT Historical Society I returned to San Francisco for a conference and extended my stay in order to continue my research.

spent much more time at each location, I received only very minimal research funding and I had limited personal funds to devote to this project. This amount of time in the archives also more closely reflects our disciplinary norms—it is not uncommon in Rhetoric and Composition for archival research to be completed in just days or weeks, whereas in fields such as History, months are the more common measurement of time spent in the archives.

While I found extremely rich materials at the archives despite the brevity of my research times there, I was fortunate that my data were derived not only from these research trips but also from online materials and personal contact with archivists. The NTLA is fully cataloged in their library's online database, and there are a few websites that offer overviews of the collection.¹⁵ The GLBT Historical Society has an extensive website devoted to the organization, which has an imbedded search engine for the collection.¹⁶ From the Historical Society's website, researchers can also navigate to the Online Archive of California, which provides finding aids for some of the manuscript collections housed at the GLBT Historical Society.¹⁷ Though the SMA does not have an independent website, I was able to learn about the collection through word-of-mouth, and after speaking with the archivist, I was sent electronic documents that described the collection.

¹⁵ See the Gender Advocacy and Education website at <<http://www.gender.org/ntgla/index.html>>, the University of Michigan Special Collections description at <<http://www.lib.umich.edu/node/19958>>, and a subject librarian's guide at <<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/content.php?pid=29017&sid=253054>>. All accessed on December 11th, 2009.

¹⁶ The GLBT Historical Society's website is <<http://www.glbthistory.org/index.html>>. Accessed December 11th, 2009.

¹⁷ The GLBT Historical Society's page in the Online Archive of California can be found at <<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/institutions/Gay,+Lesbian,+Bisexual,+Transgender+Historical+Society>>. Accessed December 11th, 2009.

After my research trips, I continued to collect data because I had asked to be kept informed about each of the archival collections. Since I had to be a member of the GLBT Historical Society to use the collections during the week, I paid a \$30 membership fee, which also subscribed me to their newsletter and mailing list. I gave the SMA \$30 and a book in order to make an equivalent donation.¹⁸ I did not make any donation to the NTLA because it is no longer actively collecting and is under the scope of the university library system. I've been in touch with each of the archivists several times since my initial visits and have remained informed about the collections.

Taken together, the materials I culled from my research trips, follow-up interactions, and the data already available online generated a rich collection of documents about each of the three archives. I was able to use these materials to conduct textual and rhetorical analyses, carefully attending to the language practices, the perceived audience, and the political and cultural contexts of the documents.

While I had collected this vast amount of documentary material, I quickly learned that because things can change so quickly in the archives, these materials rapidly became historical themselves. Two of the best examples of this issue of timeliness relates to the ways of searching for materials in the NTLA and the GLBT Historical Society: at both places, the cataloging systems radically changed in the middle of my research process. Though I found this frustrating at times, I came to see it as further supporting my overall argument that archives warrant analysis throughout the research process, which I attend to in more detail in chapter four. While in some cases these changes render my analysis

¹⁸ Because I requested that many copies be made at the SMA that weren't charged to me, I decided that the \$30 donation plus a book would be equal to my donation to the GLBT Historical Society, where I paid for copies out of pocket.

out of date, by leaving the original analysis intact and explaining the changes in footnotes, I hope that readers will gain a better understanding of how dramatically archives can evolve even within the few years that I have been researching and writing this dissertation.

In addition to analyzing my own research process and the materials I collected from the three archives, I also conducted approximately 20 official interviews with researchers, volunteers, and archivists.¹⁹ I was granted permission to conduct these interviews from the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board in March of 2008 (see Appendix B). I began finding research participants by contacting the principle archivists and requesting an interview, which I was granted at each archive. During these interviews, I asked archivists if they knew of any volunteers, employees, or researchers that I might contact to schedule further interviews. Through this word-of-mouth fashion, I contacted individuals affiliated with the archives and secured the bulk of my interviews in this way. A few months later, I also circulated a general call for participants on relevant listservs and was subsequently contacted by a few individuals who volunteered to participate.

My motivation for seeking out research participants was to access what Dorothy E. Smith calls “work knowledge.” To gather work knowledge, “I would be seeking people who are knowledgeable about the work in the area I was investigating because they are doing it. I would be interested throughout in participants’ experiential knowledge of the work involved” (149). This approach is inherently feminist in that it de-centers my

¹⁹ I spoke with many more than the 20 people I officially interviewed, but these conversations were either “off the record” or informal and in passing. Though my data does not officially account for these conversations, I found them to be tremendously insightful and provocative.

role as researcher and uplifts the “work knowledge” of people engaged in archiving and archival research.

The participants in this study were not sought or selected based on their identity in any way. While I came to learn that several people who participated are transgender-identified, I did not specifically seek out transgender individuals as participants since this research is not on transgender people but on the practices of transgender archiving. I did not ask questions pertaining to the identities of participants beyond their practical relationship to the archives, though when this information was introduced by the researcher, I did include it in my data. In my future work, it would be interesting to assess how different archival users respond to transgender materials, but such analysis is not within the scope of this project.

About half of the interviews were conducted in person during my research trips to each archive, two interviews were conducted on the phone, and several were conducted over email. In each of these contexts, I asked similar questions of participants, such as:

For researchers:

- What brought you to this archive?
- Is this your first visit to this archive?
- What are you hoping to find here?
- Would you call your experience successful?
- Can you tell me about your experience searching for materials?
- Did you meet any dead ends?
- Did you find anything that surprised you?

- Did you find anything that you felt particularly attached to?
- Has your experience in the archive changed you in any way?

For archivists and volunteers:

- How long have you worked with this archive?
- What experiences or trainings have you had that led you to work with this archive?
- Do you have any special professional training?
- How did you become interested in archiving?
- Do you have any personal or political attachment to this archive?
- Who is the target audience of this archive?
- What are your thoughts on the amount and quality of usage that this archive has?
- Have you had a role in developing the cataloguing system? If so, what specific contributions did you provide?
- Would you change anything with the current cataloguing system?
- How well do you think the current cataloguing system functions?
- How do you think this archive relates to others that share a similar topic?
- Are there any other archives that you would consider peer institutions?

These were some of the basic questions that I used as starting points for each interview because they allowed me to better understand how archivists and researchers assessed the

archives. Two major themes shaped these questions—archival logics and archival affects. I was interested in these themes because they struck me as the most rhetorical elements of archives and also the most elusive for a single researcher to understand without collecting data from others involved with the archives.

All of the interviews I conducted were done in an open-ended format that allowed both me and the participant to direct the conversation in ways that seemed most relevant or interesting. The average length of an interview was approximately one hour, but some took place over several days and totaled several hours. Email interviews began with me sending a list of questions to the participant, who would respond to each, and we would email back and forth several more times to expand or clarify the original answers.

My interviewing methodology was informed by feminist qualitative methods, which problematize and complicate the power dynamics inherent in research relationships. As scholars have noted, feminist qualitative methods often include open-ended interviews, intent listening, regular participant feedback, collaborative writing, and sensitive representation (Kirsch; DeVault). While I did engage in open-ended interviews, intent listening, and sensitive representation, I was not able to seek out regular participant feedback and given that this is a dissertation, collaborative writing would not have been appropriate. I did, however, remain in contact and continuing conversation with many of the individuals I interviewed. Though I did not always actively collect data, these continuing conversations deepened my thinking on many important occasions and allowed my writing to be influenced by participants throughout the entire process. As a feminist, I am personally and politically committed to sensitive representation of research

participants, though that was not a major methodological concern in this project since I used interview data to characterize and represent archives, not people.

Another aspect of feminist methodology that informed this project was my own relationship to the topic of transgender archiving, particularly given the ethical complexities I detail above. In *Traces of a Stream*, Jacqueline Jones Royster explains that African American women intellectuals who employ Afrofeminist models “speak and interpret *with* the community, not just *for* the community, or *about* the community” (275). Similarly, I continually position myself as one member of a complex and diverse network of communities. As a transgender person, my analysis of transgender archiving has direct relevance for my own life and history. Though I personally view history as a positive and useful genre, I am often in the company of transgender people who feel exactly the opposite. Consequently, I maintain a deep humility in relation to transgender archiving so that I do not universalize my own experiences or purport to speak for particularly communities.

This is an approach that I employ not only with interview data but also with archival materials. In their recent article on archival methods, Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch argue that, “We also need to resolve to participate in a reciprocal cross-boundary exchange in which we talk *with* and listen *to* others, whether they are speaking to us in person or via archival materials” (336). Cross-boundary exchange happens not just in interpersonal conversations and cross-community dialog, but also trans-historically as researchers engage with figures who may not be speaking with us directly, but whose documents facilitate a form of communication.

Data Interpretation and Use

My basic agreement with participants, which was articulated in an informed consent form and confirmed orally, was that their participation in this study and any information they provided would necessarily remain confidential. For this reason, the vast majority of participants are not named in the dissertation. Two exceptions to this are Dallas Denny (founder of the NTLA) and Bet Power (archivist at the SMA), who explicitly requested that I use their names. I decided not to use pseudonyms for any other participants because participants were not the subject of this research so I did not feel compelled to “tell their story.” In order to contextualize interview data throughout the dissertation, I refer to the participant’s general relationship to the archive (e.g., “researcher” or “long-time volunteer”). Though these choices about representation may cause readers to experience the data as disembodied or abstract, I have done whatever possible within this framework to prevent that.

It is also important for me to explain that partly as a consequence of the different institutional settings that I worked with, the amount and quality of data I was able to collect for each archive varied. Archives are complex institutions and to best understand their rhetorical work, I used a blend of several methods including rhetorical, textual, and spatial analysis, interviews, direct observation, and personal experience. Not only was this approach extremely generative and informative, it was also necessary because the quantity and quality of data generated by each method was inconsistent among the archives. For example, at the SMA, Power and I spoke at length on several different

occasions, whereas at the NTLA, I had less access to individuals who controlled the collection historically and in the present. Throughout this project I remained mindful of such inconsistencies and I intentionally compensated for them by more carefully attending to whatever materials were available. While other scholars contributing to the archival turn may draw on one or two of the methods I mention, I am not aware of any other scholars who have used all of these methods to study archives.

With the volume of data I had collected, I amassed my own research archive. As many researchers do, I developed personal reading practices and strategies for navigating my data archive. After I had transcribed all of the interviews, I coded them by hand. This process involved reading all of the interviews as a mass, taking notes on recurrent categories and themes, assigning unique flags to each of these 18 categories, and then re-reading all of the transcripts while marking and flagging the categories. I maintained a separate log to track which categories were used in which interviews, eventually enabling me to use the coding categories like an index that directed me to particular interviews. Once I had a sense of the categories and the amount of material in each coding category, I generated broader thematics that encompassed several coding categories, and eventually these thematics became the basis of the three data chapters.

The three data chapters that I mapped out after coding and analyzing my data were significantly different than those that I had proposed in my prospectus. This revised vision of the dissertation as a whole is a testament to my feminist methodology of being open to following the data and respecting the information that was offered. While I am unable to collaboratively write my dissertation, as many feminists might encourage for

the most egalitarian researcher-participant relationship, my adaptation of my project based on the participant data illustrates the dialectical relationship I develop with participants and the data generated by my research process. The resulting data chapters successfully capture the major themes of my research and are a testament to the benefits of my mixed methods approach to analyzing transgender archiving.

Chapter Three

Historicizing Archives: LGBT Archives of/as Resistance

A people without a past are not a people. (Martin Meeker, qtd. in Marech)

[Archiving] is not neutral either in origin or effect. It reflects the biases of a diverse social order, but with one important qualification: that those with the most power and wealth in society will dominate the field of knowledge, so that it serves their interests. (Zinn 520)

When a person enters an LGBT archive, he/she/ze enters into a space of resistance. It goes without saying that LGBT people are oppressed in contemporary U.S. society. And while that oppression may be shifting, perhaps even lessening, the basic social context of oppression that catalyzed the establishment of independent LGBT archives has not changed in the six decades of the history of LGBT archiving in the United States—LGBT archiving began as a political strategy to resist historical erasure and it continues today in the same vein.

As I reviewed in the opening chapter, rhetorical historiography in Rhetoric and Composition has catalyzed what is now identifiable as an archival turn in the field. The thrust of the archival turn is the call to consider archives themselves as the subject of research to better understand the rhetorical complexities at work in these institutions. The political function of LGBT archives is particularly well suited to this approach because such overt political aims underscore the rhetorical framework of every archive and influences every researcher's encounters with archival texts and archives themselves.

This first data chapter begins my critical investigation of the rhetorical dimensions of transgender archiving by historicizing the three archives that are the focus of this dissertation. By locating LGBT archives generally, and transgender archiving in particular, within concrete social and material contexts, this chapter argues that the materials collected within archives cannot be separated from the broader context of the archives themselves. Rigorous historicizing of archives, such as that which I model throughout this chapter, is a necessary step in understanding how historical artifacts came to be archived, archivable, and continue to be maintained and accessed in the contemporary moment.

I open the chapter with a brief portrait of the emergence and continuing political function of LGBT archiving in the United States. While LGBT archives typically function to resist historical erasure, I explore a few other purposes that they can serve, including validating contemporary LGBT people and inspiring social change. Particularly given the rapid rise of computerized technologies and the digital age, the political and social context of LGBT archives is rapidly changing, which is critical to this study of the specific practices of transgender archiving.

Next, I provide focused rhetorical histories of each of the three archives that are the subject of this dissertation. Providing a history of an archives may seem like a strange venture, given that archives themselves function to provide history. But since archives are not universally designed or implemented, tracing their historical emergence and development can be an insightful, if uncommon, practice. My primary goal is to provide a *rhetorical* history of each archives because of the provocative questions it prompts:

what is the rhetorical situation for these archives? What was the original exigency for starting the collection? Who is the audience of the archives and how has it changed? Are the archives trying to persuade people to do particular things? How has verbal and non-verbal (signs, symbols, images, etc.) language worked for these collections, and how has it evolved? In what ways do the politics and motives of the collectors matter? How are transgender materials positioned within the broader collecting scope of each archive? Rather than attempting to answer all of these questions, the histories I trace touch upon the major events in a given archive's history and then focus on a few aspects of that archive's history that elucidate the specific rhetorical considerations that surface in relation to transgender archiving. As I demonstrate in the previous chapters, transgender archiving is an ethically and representationally complex practice and the rhetorical histories of the three archives I provide highlight the ways that archives account for these complexities. My argument is that archives are rhetorical institutions in that they begin with political and historical exigency and are continually adapted in response to changing times to facilitate particular uses of the past for perceived audiences.

As these three histories attuned to transgender materials demonstrate, archives are shifting landscapes that can be rife with controversy and competing political interests. In the third and final section of this chapter, then, I explore three ways that archives can be shifting landscapes: identity and naming, technology, and geography and location. By understanding each of these three elements of archives as historically evolving and continually shifting, researchers would be better poised to evaluate the contemporary

archival context of historical materials and consequently, would be more critical researchers and interpreters of archival materials.

Battling Phantom Giants: LGBT Archives of/as Resistance

We're making history, not just preserving it. (Paula Lichtenberg, qtd. in Koskovich, 32)

The Vatican Secret Archives is estimated to contain about 52 miles of shelves of archival material, some of which dates back to the eighth century (“Secret Archives”; “The Vatican”). If this figure is correct, that would mean that the Vatican Secret Archives shelves would stretch further than either the width (37 miles) or length (48 miles) of Rhode Island. In Dan Brown’s *Angels & Demons*, we are given a fictional description of the main storage room in the Vatican Secret Archives:

At first glance the room appeared to be a darkened airline hanger in which someone had built a dozen free-standing racquetball courts. Langdon knew of course what the glass-walled enclosures were. He was not surprised to see them; humidity and heat eroded ancient vellums and parchments, and proper preservation required hermetic vaults like these— airtight cubicles that kept out humidity and natural acids in the air...In the blackness of each cell, Langdon sensed the phantom giants, row upon row of towering stacks, laden with history. This was one hell of a collection. (241-242)

While Brown’s depiction of hermetically sealed vaults is almost certainly exaggerated, this passage nicely captures what a best-case archival environment would include.

Gregory S. Hunter's *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives* suggests that there are six aspects of storage environment that every archivist must consider: temperature, relative humidity, air quality, light, biological agents, and holding maintenance practices (140). The impacts of these factors are tremendous. Consider, for example, that "the useful life of paper is cut approximately in half with every ten degree Fahrenheit increase in temperature above 68 degrees. Conversely, for every ten degree decrease, the expected life of paper is effectively doubled" (140-141).

Of course, creating and maintaining the most ideal archival environment is extraordinarily expensive and as a consequence, it generally follows that the preservation of archival materials mimics social hierarchies; well-funded collections can make their materials last longer. One of the best archival environments that I learned about in my research is the Library and Archives Canada. For this repository that maintains the documents produced by the Government of Canada and important national artifacts, there is a state-of-the-art Preservation Centre including environment-controlled vaults that appear to be quite similar to Brown's fictionalized Vatican Secret Archives.¹ An archive maintained by an entity as powerful and wealthy as the country of Canada can afford to invest in an archival environment that will enable long-term preservation of their records and records they are invested in keeping.

In addition to inadvertently hinting at the socioeconomic dimension of archiving, Brown's fictionalized account of the Vatican Secret Archives also offers a vivid metaphor—he refers to the endless rows of towering stacks as "phantom giants." The

¹ To read more about their Preservation Centre, visit <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/13/130202_e.html>.

phantasmic quality of a collection such as the Vatican Secret Archives isn't merely its sheer volume, but perhaps more importantly its power to control history through archiving. Malea Powell's account of her work in the Newberry Library exemplifies the impacts that collections that loom like phantom giants can have on researchers. She writes, "As I sat there and thought about empire, I started to get very cold—felt myself grow puny and insignificant in the face of imperialism and shivered at the impossibility of it all—me, an Indian, a mixed-blood, here in this odd colonial space" (120). The cold Powell felt was not just from sitting in the chill of an efficient preservation environment, but rather, she became cold as she had the intellectual realization that she was immersed in the colonial archives. Powell's feelings of being "puny and insignificant" seem prompted by being in the proximity of such treasured and powerful documents, particularly as an Indian who is aware of the colonial uses to which such collections were (and are?) put. Powell and (the fictional) Langdon both experienced a dwarfing effect from the phantom giants' combination of volume and intellectual power.

For countless decades, some might argue centuries, these same phantom giants were unconcerned with, perhaps even intentionally opposed to, collecting LGBT materials.² To resist this effective erasure of LGBT materials, people began to establish grassroots archives outside of the well-funded and powerful institutional archives. To my knowledge, the earliest LGBT-specific archival collection in the United States began in 1942 with the informal collecting of materials for what is now the ONE National Gay and

² I realize that "LGBT" becomes anachronistic when referring to even the recent past, but the point remains that materials relating to sexual and gender minorities have been routinely excluded from prominent collections. This is particularly true for archives maintained by organized religions and the state, which account for both the oldest and the largest archives in existence (though corporate archives may now challenge that truism).

Lesbian Archives.³ The founder of that collection, Jim Kepner, became “determined to collect objective information about homosexuality when he found none in the public library” (“The 1940s”). This exigency, to collect LGBT materials because no other institution was, is very commonly offered as the explanation for beginning independent LGBT archives. Kepner regarded the San Francisco public library as the place where he expected to find homosexual material. When he failed to find any, he started his own collection. In contrast to powerful institutions, LGBT archives began when people like Kepner started to pull together scraps of material with no budget, no designated archival space, and no formal archival training, let alone hermetically sealed vaults.

In relation to this lineage, the Sexual Minorities Archives is the oldest of the three archives that are central in this dissertation, beginning in 1974, still many years after Kepner’s original collecting. In my interview with SMA archivist Bet Power, he told me about a trip he took to New York City in the 1970s to see the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA), founded by Joan Nestle and Deb Edel. During that visit, Power explains, “we actually figured out that both of those collections started within two months of each other...It’s almost a collective consciousness or something, where just the need becomes apparent to people.” It’s interesting to imagine why and how these two collections began almost in tandem, despite one being in Chicago while the other was in New York City.⁴ While the 1970s saw a budding collective consciousness about the importance of

³ LGBT materials were certainly collected earlier than this date by a variety of individuals and some institutions, often inadvertently, but the preliminary collections of the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives seems to be the first exclusively LGBT collection in the United States.

⁴ My personal theory about why there was a growing investment in history during this time period is because the riots of the late 1960s (particularly Stonewall) had ended and in their wake, gay communities seemed to develop particularly around the nexus of gay pride. As will become clear later in the chapter, the beginning of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s also catalyzed an increased attention to history and archiving.

maintaining LGBT archives, that commitment has seemingly only continued to strengthen and expand.

For those that have been invested in LGBT archiving for many decades, the contemporary widespread interest in LGBT archiving is quite striking. Joan Nestle, for example, reflected in 1998 upon just how different the current landscape seems:

When the New York Public Library opened its gay and lesbian history exhibit last year in a cocktail party atmosphere, I knew our pioneering days were over. As I toured the exhibit, one that the Lesbian Herstory Archives had contributed to, I thought of all the years the library had been part of the problem—its card catalog a journey in self-hatred for a curious “homosexual.” Our history with its documents and images is hot stuff now, capable of pulling in much-needed revenue, and it is true that these institutions have the staff and often the space for which grassroots archives have to beg. My heart lies with the lesbian and gay grassroots history projects and archives that risked all when the establishment would not go near queer material except as examples of pathology, but these are new times, and hopefully, our communities will be able to support differing visions of how memory is best cherished. (235)

Like Kepner’s expectation that the San Francisco Public Library would have objective information on homosexuals, Nestle uses the New York Public Library’s newfound

embrace of gay and lesbian materials as a barometer of the state of LGBT archiving.⁵ It's important to note that this climate change isn't an uncomplicated one for Nestle because the consequence is that grassroots archives' "pioneering days [are] over." And as Nestle points out, libraries (in her example the NYPL's card catalog) have the power to do serious harm for curious patrons.

In the tension between what Nestle calls "the establishment" (i.e., public libraries and likely university libraries) and grassroots archives, the interlocking differences in environment include: funding, long-term preservation, physical conservation, access tools and technologies, availability of materials, staffing, adherence to professional standards, and intellectual context. While grassroots archives may have been established to provide a relatively stable and safe environment for LGBT materials, the determinants of stability and safety are not measurable simply by preservation standards. In other words, the physical preservation of documents is only one aspect of the safety of historical artifacts given that other environmental factors (listed above) can obscure materials to such an extent that they are entirely inaccessible and as a consequence, their continued preservation may be irrelevant.

One volunteer for a grassroots archives nicely captured this dilemma as she mused in our interview, "What is safety? Is it, you know, being locked up at night in a library? Or is it being in a place where people are really invested in it and care about it? Maybe it's not physically safe, maybe it's in a flood plain next to the Connecticut River,

⁵ On September 16th, 2009, the SFPL began an official blog on their LGBT collections which is notably named "Queerest. Library. Ever." The SFPL, like the NYPL, seems to have made some dramatic strides in their commitment to LGBT materials. The blog can be found at: www.queerestlibraryever.blogspot.com. Also, I recently learned of generous research grants that are available to work with the LGBT materials at the NYPL—not only is there money for collecting materials, but now such institutions are able to actively encourage and enable use of those materials.

you know, but at least you know that it's like not gonna be [intentionally] burned down."

With all LGBT materials, there's an ongoing negotiation between intellectual security and valuing on the one hand, and preservation and conservation considerations on the other.

Grassroots archives, by their very nature, are less environmentally and financially secure than well-funded archival institutions. On the other hand, grassroots LGBT archives intellectually secure their materials in a way that is impossible to duplicate when LGBT materials are just a small part of a larger collection.

Intellectual security was a key catalyst for the founding of LGBT archives, but the rise of the digital age has dramatically altered the foundational landscape where LGBT materials were scarce and in need of protection. When Kepner began collecting materials in the early 1940s, he predated common use of the Internet by more than a half century! When I do a search for "GLBT history" in Google today, August 27th 2009 at 3:09 pm (and yes, the exact time matters), I receive 5,370,000 hits (I think Google might round to the nearest ten-thousandth).⁶ Of course, not all of these sites are relevant, and most would not qualify as the "objective" history that Kepner sought. Still, this demonstrates that we might now have an information management problem rather than an issue of scarcity of information.

Renée M. Sentilles addresses precisely this issue in "Toiling in the Archives of Cyberspace" where she explains, "Historians are generally more comfortable coping with a scarcity than an abundance of materials...But now we are living in an age when

⁶ Though I am completely baffled by this, when I repeat the search for "GLBT history" today, March 7th 2010, I get 252,000 hits. I cannot even begin to account for this huge difference, though it still illustrates my point that there is an overwhelming amount of material related to queer history on the internet. It also points to how quickly things can change in digital contexts, which is very important to remember as we increasingly turn to digitization for (perceived) posterity.

information is being stored at a furious rate...How can we hope to address or incorporate such a vast quantity of information with research methods created to address the opposite problem?" (141). The same question could be slightly altered to apply to grassroots LGBT archives: "How can we hope to address or incorporate such a vast quantity of information with [archival] methods created to address the opposite problem?" The importance of this question, for the argument I am developing here, is that grassroots LGBT archives are not only facing dramatically changing political contexts, intellectual environments, and archival technologies, but they are confronting what might be the end of their foundational exigency—resistance of historical erasure.

While grassroots LGBT archives may no longer have exclusive claims to historical materials related to LGBT people, there are several other ways that they function that aren't reproducible in highly institutionalized archives. First, grassroots archives reaffirm living people by providing a place where all LGBT people can donate their personal materials. Such open collection policies signify that every LGBT person is worthy of being remembered and archived. The Lesbian Herstory Archives has articulated this mission since its inception with their frequent saying, "if you have the courage to touch another woman, you are a famous lesbian" (Nestle 228). This saying, and the sentiment behind it, encourages lesbian women to see their personal relationships as courageous, or in contemporary feminist lingo, to see the personal as political. In calling all lesbians famous, the LHA also garners interest in donating to the collection and gaining support for historical projects within the lesbian community. Even if LGBT people do not donate to a grassroots archives, the very fact that they could donate their

materials somewhere can itself have a huge impact on a person and the way they understanding their status as a sexual or gender minority.

A second function of grassroots LGBT archives is their ability to effect social change, which begins with their uncommon methods for acquiring materials. A brief account from the GLBT Historical Society will be instructive here: in conversation with a long-time volunteer at the Historical Society, I inquired about how the organization queers the notion of an archives (a claim made in several contexts). He responded, “I kind of suspect that most traditional major archives do not regard dumpster divers as one of their important field archivists. We do. And we do it still. What’s in that trash can? And again, that’s part of the queerness of recognizing where’s the good stuff for us. Most of it is not going to be offered in a major literary auction and if it is, we don’t have an acquisitions budget.” In contrast to public and university libraries that can (sometimes) afford to buy their LGBT materials, grassroots archives still rely exclusively on a donation system.⁷

In a 2005 article in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, then executive director Tom Kissack discussed with a reporter how someone’s trash can become a tool for social change:

“Recently, someone dropped off two photo albums that had been recovered from the trash. The albums document two commitment ceremonies between Cora Latz and Etta Perkins. The first was held 25 years ago; the second took place in their senior center shortly before both

⁷ There may be some exceptions to this, but for the three archives in this dissertation, the vast majority of materials were donated.

died recently.” Historical archives are not just repositories of the past, Kissack said carefully. An old photo album, for example, can shed light on the current conversation about the boundaries of marriage. “If Cora and Etta's story”—and stories like theirs—“had a broad audience, the debate about the issue would have been different,” he said. (Marech)

Grassroots archives, then, attempt to use what some might consider trash to reach a broad audience and inspire social change. Of course, Kissack's confidence in this outcome is based on the assumption that by further disseminating personal histories, enough people will be inspired to change their position to support legislative reform. Whether or not this is possible is actually not as important to my argument as is the fact that it is a *perceived* function of grassroots archives. Because grassroots LGBT archives are positioned as catalysts for social change, they become not only relevant in the present moment, but critical participants in contemporary and future politics.

These three possible functions of LGBT archives—to resist historical erasure, to uplift contemporary LGBT people, and to inspire social change—demonstrate the validity of the Paula Litchenberg epigraph at the beginning of this section. LGBT archives are indeed “making history, not just preserving it” as they do rhetorical work that includes basic preservation of historical documents but also goes far beyond that.

Rhetorical Histories

While Kepner may have started gathering LGBT materials in the early 1940s to “collect objective information about homosexuality,” given my argument in the previous

section, it seems clear that such a goal of preserving “objective” information on LGBT people is always already a political venture. Though I don’t find this the least bit problematic, I do believe that it is critical to approach archives with an awareness of their larger political functions.

In her introduction to *Archive Stories*, Antoinette Burton argues that archives are deeply contextual institutions:

For archives do not simply arrive or emerge fully formed; nor are they innocent of struggles for power in either their creation or their interpretive applications. Though their own origins are often occluded and the exclusions on which they are premised often dimly understood, all archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history. (6)

In the previous section I reviewed the general origins of LGBT archiving in the United States, following Burton’s argument that “archives come into being in and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures.” As I shift my focus in this section to the three specific archives that are the subject of this dissertation, I will treat the archives as “artifacts of history” as I focus on the rhetorical aspects of their origins and developments.

These will not be traditional histories in that I do not use chronology as my primary lens, nor will I focus on the broader pressures that Burton mentions. Instead, I will provide what I refer to as rhetorical histories because my attention to the rhetorical

elements of these archives will both provide readers with an overall picture of the development of these archives and will illustrate why rhetoricians are particularly poised to critically analyze archives. The questions that I posed in the introduction to this chapter guide this rhetorical analysis: what is the rhetorical situation for these archives? What was the original exigency for starting the collection? Who is the audience of the archives and how has it changed? Are the archives trying to persuade people to do particular things? How has verbal and non-verbal (signs, symbols, images, etc.) language worked for these collections, and how has it evolved? In what ways do the politics and motives of the collectors matter? How are transgender materials positioned within the broader collecting scope of each archive?

Revisionist rhetorical historiography has rightly interrogated the story in every history, and this extends to archives as well, which are not just the source of history, but “always already stories” (Burton 20). In the next three sections, I will tell *histories* of each of the three archives by paying particular attention to transgender materials and the shifting rhetorical situations of the archives. As I have argued, LGBT archival collections originated in response to specific historical urgencies and they are therefore rhetorical institutions in that they address larger social conditions. Further, the everyday functioning of archives is developed and adapted according to potential users as well as to questions of representation, identity, and naming.

While I hope these histories will be a useful introduction to the archives, I also hope that they serve as examples for just how complicated the political and rhetorical work of archives can be. As it will become clear, I am building toward an argument that

archives are constantly shifting landscapes, which has profound impacts not only on researchers and the research process, but also on our broader cultural practices of preserving history. Though there will be many opportunities for analysis and application of rhetorical theory throughout these histories, I am strategically delaying that analysis until the sections following these histories so that I am able to provide readers with concise and contained histories. As I explained in chapter two, I am also prioritizing my own original data throughout these chapters because of the rich insights into transgender archiving that it offers.

The Sexual Minorities Archives: “Never Again the Silence”

The Sexual Minorities Archives (SMA) was founded in 1974 in Chicago, Illinois, making it one of the oldest collections of LGBTI materials in the United States. The collection was originally a lending library called “The New Alexandria Library” (NAL) and was one part of The Lesbian Feminist Center (LFC), which managed a storefront in Chicago until 1978. Around 1978, according to archival records, the name of the archives began to include “for Lesbian Women,” which shortened to NALLW. Again according to archival records, the name also seemed to unofficially change in the mid-1980s to “The New Alexandria Lesbian Library” (NALL).

The “Alexandria Library” that is referenced in all of these early permutations of the archive’s name refers to a passage in Elizabeth Gould Davis’ *The First Sex*, in which she describes the burning of the legendary library in Alexandria, Egypt. Davis’s basic argument in this book is that women’s contribution to civilization has been greater than

man's, which was evidenced by the lost materials once collected at that library (supposedly including Sappho's poetry and records). In originally naming the archive "The New Alexandria Library," the founding collective wanted to invoke a strong resistance to historical erasure and oversight. As it was explained to me by archivist Bet Power, "The naming of the original collection was to say this is the *New Alexandria Library*. We're never going to have that happen again. We're never going to have our, our lesbian culture destroyed. We're going to collect it, preserve it, and value it...further it."

The "we" invoked in this quote is the lesbian collectivity that Power was a part of. Power joined the Lesbian Feminist Center (LFC) collective in 1976 (when he identified as a stone butch) and began working very closely with the founding archivist, Barbara Henry (who publishes as J.R. Roberts). Like many radical lesbian feminist communities in the 1970s, the LFC had separatist politics, which included, according to an August 1st, 1976 policy document, "that men, no matter what age, are not welcome in the center." It was in this highly political context that the NAL began the archival project, including a lending library, that worked to collect, preserve, value, and further lesbian history.

In February of 1978, just two years after Power joined the collective, the LFC closed its doors to the public because of internal divides and financial problems. Rather than eliminating the archive, Power decided to take it into his own Chicago apartment. Not only did this move represent a huge shift for the collection, from a storefront to a private apartment, but the governance of the archive also changed from collective to individual. While the collection was in Power's Chicago apartment, he maintained some visiting hours as his work schedule allowed. In 1979, Power moved the collection again,

this time to western Massachusetts. After one more local move, the archive was settled into its current location in Northampton, MA on the bank of the Connecticut River. Power's decision to move the collection with him to Massachusetts was quite influential given that the original archive was intentionally Chicago-focused. Thus, as this collection moved geographically, so too were its politics in motion.

Starting in the mid-1980s, just a few years after settling himself and the archive into their current home, Power found himself at a crossroads with the collection. In terms of what he calls the "identity of the collection," Power explains "I always knew that I was someone curating a lesbian collection that wasn't a lesbian." Though he had identified as a stone butch during his participation in the Lesbian Feminist Center collective,⁸ in the mid-1980s he began to better understand his transgender identity through his friendship with Lou Sullivan, which lasted from about 1984 until Sullivan died in 1991.

Motivated by Sullivan's death, Power began to increase his transgender activism and he faced a difficult decision about the collection, which he and I spoke about at length on several occasions. The following is a short version of his explanation of that period of change:

So, 1991, I was like what am I going to do about this archives? Oh my god. I had to make a decision like, okay, I knew that it wasn't ever just strictly lesbian content...the content was always lesbian and gay at the very least intertwined. And even in the early days, back in the day, you'd get stories about and photos of drag queens and the drag scene and all, so

⁸ Notably, Power distinguishes between identifying as a "stone butch" and a "lesbian." For Power, and many others, "stone butch" signals a non-female gender, while "lesbian" implies that an individual is a woman who loves women.

honestly, I had to say the content itself was never strictly lesbian. And as the movement changed...it rightly became, again in the early nineties, at least in this area, it became lesbian, gay, bi, and trans. So, I had to say to myself: I can do two things. I can either...keep it as a lesbian-identified collection and donate it because it's not going to be me because, you know, it's leaving me out. Or, I can say it's going to follow the path of the [national movement]...When we do things like this, an archive decides to become LGBTISM...it reflects what's going on in the national movement. And it helps to build that. So, that, the way our archives identify, I think, is an underpinning to the political, the more organized national movement and organizations and what they do. So I went that way. I said: ho, lesbian gay bisexual trans. And you know what? We better get really busy building up the trans portion and the bisexual portion and the gay male portion because we're very heavy on lesbian materials...but my mission then became build up the other communities holdings and stay with it.

Power's description of his decision of having to either change the collecting scope or donate the collection is a very insightful moment that highlights the complexities of identity-based archiving. Since he no longer identified as a stone butch, he was no longer included in the collection (at least not prominently). The changing of the collection, then, happened in parallel and inextricably from Power's own transition from identifying as stone butch to identifying as transgender. Throughout my research, I have not found another collection that has shifted focus symbiotically with the archivist. Of course, this

shift was only possible because the archive is a private grassroots collection that is not dependent on specific funding sources that have a role in determining the collection. Moreover, by expanding the collecting scope, Power greatly expanded the number of potential donors.

Once the identity of the collection changed, Power quickly realized that the collecting practices also needed to change so that the materials would reflect the new direction of the archives. He needed to “get really busy building up the trans portion.” In these shifts, Power is at once showing that naming isn’t overly deterministic (“it wasn’t ever just strictly lesbian content”) and at the same time, that naming can be deeply important (“the way our archives identify...is an underpinning to the political, the more organized national movement”). This sheds light on an important dynamic that occurs between contemporary transgender activism and LGBT archives. Though some people may imagine archives as exclusively historical, Power’s implicit argument is that archives can be the leaders in social change, as I explained in regards to the GLBTHS as well. I’ve spent many years researching in archives and working with archivists in non-LGBT-exclusive archives and this was the first time I had encountered the argument that archives can be a *source* for social change. To Power, the archive’s transition reflects the national movement, but it also “helps to build” momentum in that movement. I find it quite powerful to note here that archivists can imagine archives as simultaneously past and future oriented, as using history to become trend-setters for linguistic and political change. Also important to note is that though Power sees the archive’s transition as reflective of the national movement, other collections such as the Lesbian Herstory

Archives have not changed their archival identity, which illustrates that even though many organizations (archives included) may be moving toward very explicit transgender inclusion, not all archives have completely shifted their scope (or at least their name).

To mirror the change of the collecting scope, in 1991 Power also changed the name of the archives to the Sexual Minorities Archives. His decision was based on the most inclusive title he could imagine; “I didn’t wanna do the lesbian, gay, bi, trans thing because that in itself is never ending and incomplete and it also doesn’t capture...the other sexual minorities that we collect, like BDSM, like fetish. Those materials are also in here... ‘Sexual Minorities’ actually says what it is and it also has a little bit of a flavor of, you know, the need for civil rights, with the word minorities.” Though the acronym LGBT is often used to make “gay” or “gay and lesbian” more inclusive, Power pushed against that even further and in recognizing that many people would be left out of any acronym, he decided instead for a title that would be as inclusive as he could imagine. His point that the term “minorities” also implies a civic rights angle is a critical insight. As opposed to the identity labels of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, the word “minority” positions this collection, and the people represented within it, as disadvantaged within an oppressive power structure.

By including such a wide scope of sexual minorities together in a single archive, Power is making a broader political statement. He argues, “It’s very political to have all of these groups in one collection, side by side and they’re all getting along [laughter]. These books are all getting along nicely, you know what I mean? [laughter]...They’re not fighting [laughter]. So it’s an underpinning—this can be done. We can have all of these

communities working together to advance a broader agenda.” This harmonious relationship seems to be a somewhat idyllic contrast to the inclusion debates and disagreements that can plague LGBT activism. For example, the longstanding debate over the two different versions of the employment non-discrimination act, one which includes protections for gender-expression and one that is only for sexuality (which is supported by several of the most powerful gay-rights organizations), has been a very divisive issue in LGBT communities. By comparison, archives can seem like a utopic environment where all of these groups get along.

When I pressed Power a bit about why he didn’t choose “queer” as a title for the collection, he said, “I think it leaves out some folks or communities that are represented in this archive. Like heterosexual SMers is one group that comes to mind—they wouldn’t really call themselves ‘queer.’ I think that some bisexuals wouldn’t call themselves ‘queer’...I don’t think its an umbrella term enough to incorporate all of the communities that we archive.” Again referring to the goal of making the name as inclusive as the collection itself, Power resisted “queer” as an overly narrow term. This naming does have very practical consequences, as Power was careful to highlight; “I think queer is interpreted primarily as lesbian/gay...So if you have an ally of a trans person, they’re going to say ‘oh, that’s not for me’ or a straight person who is different, someone who cross dresses part time but they are primarily straight, you know, and they go ‘oh, that’s not for me.’” This type of disidentification would effectively exclude whole groups of potential archive users, though their materials may be collected there. Thus, the naming

of the archives has consequences not merely for accurately representing the material collected, but also for the ways that potential users perceive the collection.

When the name of the archives changed, Power noticed a distinct change in the visitors. At first, he recalls, “I used to primarily just meet with lesbians who came here and, you know, I’ve had all the leaders of the lesbian community sitting right where you’re sitting [provides names]... But now it’s like Kate Bornstein has sat there, gay men have sat there and donated. It’s like a whole different, in addition to, who comes here.” As he pointed to the place where I was sitting, which happens to be the same couch he uses to watch television, I felt the presence of the legacy he referred to. In my mind I created a flip-book history of who sat on that couch—as the couch became more worn in my mind’s eye, the visitors sitting on it changed, culminating with my own presence on the couch as somewhere who was there to study those that came before. As Power is keenly aware, the name change of the collection is a rhetorical decision that is clearly responsible for that significant shift in visitors.

Though the name change also brought a change in the type of visitors, there remained some continuity in the mission of the collection. Like the original mission of the NAL to protect lesbian culture, the Sexual Minorities Archives is now often paired with the tag-line “Never Again the Silence.” As many people might recognize, this slogan implicitly nods to the ACTUP motto of “silence=death.” Power explains:

One of the necessary steps in achieving freedom [for LGBTs] is breaking silence and telling the truth because in the absence of the truth, the only thing that remains about our lives are stereotypes and lies. And so the

silence sort of enables homophobia, transphobia, and...to break it with the truth is the antidote, is the remedy. Queer archives are a direct solution to bigotry, to hatred, to transphobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia. We're the antidote because we tell the truth. We say, "no, we're not like the lies you say that we are, this is who we truly are."

Power ascribes agency to archives as he argues that they "are a direct solution to bigotry." By positioning archives as the response to silence, Power is also implying that archives speak. Though he may mean this mostly metaphorically, as a rhetorician I am interested in the literal implications—can archives speak?

That is a difficult question to answer in relation to the SMA, largely because Power himself is interwoven into the archives. As interviews with several people and my own research experiences confirmed, Power and the SMA are inextricably intertwined and Power's role as an out FTM archivist, perhaps the only one, cannot be overstated. Power speculates that having the front-person of the archives be a transgender man has a significant impact on what assumptions people will make about the collection. "I think people...probably look and wonder, well what is the nature of the identity of this collection going to be given that I'm the trans man who's curating...you know what I mean? And I don't think about that enough. But...it just makes me want to make it really way more trans [laughs]. And creative, you know what I mean? It motivates me." Again referring to the "identity of the collection," Power draws a close connection between his own identity and how that shapes the collection itself and how it is perceived by potential visitors. Power's influence on the collection is particularly apparent because the SMA is

truly a one man show. While in the past there was a small collective devoted to maintaining the archive, Power is now the only person involved with them and he is solely responsible for the collection. As the subsequent histories of the other archives will show, Power's single-handed maintenance of a collection for such a long time is quite unusual and allows him to direct the archive in a way that is quite different than a collectivity.

While Power uses his FTM identity to shape the "identity of the collection," he consciously negotiates his own whiteness and the whiteness of Northampton. He explains, "Northampton itself is residentially primarily a white area, unfortunately[...]" Sometimes I've had to talk with ["transgenders of color and other queers of color"] about it. Or they'll have questions about it. We still have to talk about things like how are your neighbors. It's crazy, in 2008." In a later conversation, he brought up this negotiation again; "And [potential visitors] have to determine that even though it's in Northampton, Massachusetts, they can come and be safe here. And so there's a bit of an obstacle in processing that at first. Until they understand that, or I communicate with them that I am an anti-racist, I am an ally." Because of both his whiteness and the whiteness of the geographical context where the archives are located, Power tries to convey his own anti-racism and the anti-racist collection practices of the archives. He has "tried to be conscious about the images that go on the walls to show individuals of color when I can," and other similar strategies, but he's still aware that the perceived "identity of the collection" continues to be white. This illustrates two things: first, an archivist's identities can greatly influence the perception of an archives, particularly when a collection is

privately maintained and run; and second, archivists can consciously present archives in order to convey a particular message to potential users (whether or not that is successful).

The GLBT Historical Society: “A home for *our* history”

Around the time that Power moved the SMA to western Massachusetts, a group of about twelve historians began to meet regularly in San Francisco, California. Members of the group included now-famous academic historians like Allan Berubé and Gayle Rubin and community historian Bill Walker (a.k.a. Willie Walker), among others. Each of the members of this group were encouraged to develop a project, which inspired Willie Walker to found the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Periodicals Archives, a collection of periodicals he maintained in his house with the help of Greg Pennington.

By 1985, Walker expanded upon his original concept and initiated the San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society. At this point, Walker was not a trained archivist or librarian, but rather a nurse on the AIDS ward at San Francisco General Hospital. Given that this archives was founded in the mid-1980s, which was when AIDS rose to pandemic proportions, particularly in the gay community, it isn't a coincidence that Walker's occupation related to AIDS. In the first newsletter published by the Historical Society in June of 1985, the cover article written by Willie Walker titled “The SFBAGL Historical Society: Where Are We Going?” explains this connection: “Interest in lesbian and gay history has seen phenomenal growth in recent times. This probably reflects the general maturation of the gay and lesbian communities, and is certainly accelerated by AIDS.” For Walker, AIDS functioned to accelerate the inevitable

turn to gay and lesbian history. AIDS was also a catalyst for turning the periodicals collection into a more formal archives. As the Historical Society's archivist explained to me, "as people were dying of AIDS, [Walker] started getting people's personal collections. And so that's how it grew into a more traditional archive with manuscript collections." As it became clear to Walker that many people who were dying of AIDS had no place for their personal materials to be preserved, he began the Historical Society to respond to this issue.

Later in the article from the first newsletter, Walker claims that "over fifty gay and/or lesbian archives now exist in the United States alone." This was a surprising statistic to me, and one that I am still not sure is accurate. Still, even if the accurate number were in the ballpark of fifty archives, that would demonstrate just how rapidly interest in lesbian and gay history spread in the few decades since Jim Keepner began collecting in the early 1940s (if his was even the first LGBT-specific archives). Walker continues, "Almost all of these are housed in private homes, offices, or other rented storage space. Few, if any, enjoy the combination of a safe and secure environment, public accessibility, and long-range funding sources that represent sound archival principles." In contrast to well-funded archives, this portrait of the state of gay and lesbian materials in the mid-1980s is a revealing look at just how vulnerable these collections were, and to some extent, still are. This excerpt also provides an introduction to the aspirations of the founders of the Historical Society—the establishment of a more viable and more sound archival environment for lesbian and gay materials.

Though Walker discussed these aspirations in 1985, it was not until 1990 that the Historical Society would procure its own space outside of a private home. The first location after Walker and Pennington's apartment was on 16th street in the Mission, where it remained for five years. After two more local moves, the Historical Society settled into its current location, 657 Mission Street, in 2002. Beyond this main site, the Historical Society also has a temporary museum display in the Castro and they have several manuscript collections on indefinite loan to the San Francisco Public Library main branch.

While I've used the phrase "lesbian and gay" to describe the Historical Society and its materials to be consistent with their nomenclature at that time, several interviewees explained to me that transgender materials and people were part of the Historical Society from its earliest days. In the summer 1993 newsletter, Susan Stryker penned an article titled "Transgender History at the GLHS" where she argues that "the recovery and preservation of transgender history has become an important focus of work at the GLHS" (4).⁹ Even in this statement, the juxtaposition of the name GLHS which does not include transgender, with Stryker's argument that transgender materials are an important focus, hints at the tension that I learned about in interviews. Like the SMA's name changes, the Historical Society also went through several name changes over the years that reflected their changing politics. One major difference, however, was that while Power had an independent decision to make, the Historical Society's name changes

⁹ It's important to note that this article defines "transgender" as "a catch-all term" just one year after Feinberg's pamphlet helped to popularize that definition. In other words, in just a few years, the term already had enough weight to claim a history at the GLHS, even if anachronistically.

happened through their board of directors, which it seems, considerably slowed down the process.

Out of the original collection, which was named the Gay and Lesbian Periodicals Archives, Walker developed the San Francisco Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Historical Society. In the early 1990s the organization switched over to being the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California, which marked their broadened focus beyond the bay area. According to the newsletter, in the fall of 1999 the organization announced that a new name, The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California, was proposed to the membership and awaited a vote (Stryker “Many” 8). In the following issue published in Spring of 2000, Susan Stryker announced in the “Executive Director’s Report” that the name of the organization had been officially changed to the GLBT Historical Society (GLBTHS); “By a narrow margin, the membership voted last November [1999] to add Bisexual and Transgender to the official title of the organization as an important way to signal our long-standing commitment to inclusiveness for all segments of the community” (Stryker “Executive” 2). Noting that the margin was “narrow,” Stryker seems to be indicating that there was a struggle behind closed doors and that all board members were not supportive of the change. It is interesting to note, too, that Stryker had served as the executive director of the organization since January of 1999 (though she had been involved since the early 1990s) as an out transgender person, though the organizational title did not officially include her.

For some, the name “gay and lesbian” already included transgender and bisexual people and materials. As one gay-identified volunteer explained to me, despite the name,

“it never occurred to people that they wouldn’t automatically collect transgender and bisexual material as well.” Still, when it became vogue for organizations all across the country to add “BT” to their “LG” or “GL” name in the 1990s, the Historical Society did not make the change until 2000, seven years after Stryker’s newsletter article discussing the important transgender collections at the Historical Society. Martin Meeker discussed the tension around this issue in his 1999 “Archives Review,” explaining,

In particular, the label “gay and lesbian” was said to exclude bisexuals, transgender individuals, and leatherfolk to a degree that many of them did not see the GLHS as their organization, and would ask questions such as “What is there for me?” and “Why, as a transsexual or a bisexual, should I donate my life’s work to a ‘gay and lesbian’ archives?” These questions kept arising despite the archives’ already significant collections relating to bisexuality and transsexuality as well as the explicitly worded mission statement that mentions “queerness of all sorts” as the focus of the GLHS. Clearly for some, the name of the organization, perhaps even more than its declarations, holds great importance in communicating who it hopes to serve. (202).

Why would the name of the organization be of more importance for some than the collections preserved by that organization? One reason might be because, as I outlined in the first section of this chapter, LGBT archives often have several functions that go beyond simple preservation. In other words, a grassroots LGBT archives might be understood as more than the sum of its parts. Potential contributors might regarded the

organization's name as the real measurement of the organization's commitment to transgender people since that is the public presentation and intervention that the archives offers. Meeker's tone as an outsider ("many of *them*") betrays a hint of frustration ("despite the archives' already significant collections;" "Clearly for some") that I suspect many involved in the organization felt regarding the possible name changes.

As with the SMA, the name change at the GLBT Historical Society was not necessarily representative of the collection practices of the archives. While I could not locate the exact collection policy that was first instituted in the late 1980s, several sources described the early collection practices as very open and especially welcoming of transgender materials. One early volunteer explained it to me in the following way:

They had written something into their mission statement about...they were interested in all kinds of gender and sexual transgression, transgression was the word that they used at the time...they even put in the [collecting] policy that they were interested particularly in material from underrepresented communities that they defined as racial and ethnic minorities, transgender, BDSM, fetish, kink, and anything...So on paper, they were explicitly saying that they were interested in collecting trans material and even kind of prioritized it as being material that they recognized as being harder to find and get.

This description of the collection policy makes it seem as though transgender materials were particularly sought-after from the beginning of the explicit collecting period, which was confirmed by other early volunteers as well. As one person described it, "there was

already a kind of written mandate in the collecting policies to collect transgender materials.”

For several people with whom I spoke, the inclusive collection policy of the Historical Society was closely related to the cultural climate of San Francisco itself. As one person said, “The attitude from the beginning was the things we want are everything. It was a very proto-queer mentality in that from the beginning[...]we wanted the broad range politically, socially, culturally, ethnically, racially, in terms of sexual practices, all the ways in which there might be diversity and variation[...] To me to some extent that was a reflection of San Francisco.” As an explicitly regional archives, it is apropos that the GLBT Historical Society’s collection policy is a reflection of San Francisco itself. One board member elaborated on this connection in an email to me:

SF has always played a large role in the history of the transgender community—whether it was because Dr. Harry Benjamin practiced here (not advocating his ideas, just pointing out that made SF an important place), because of the uprising at Compton's Cafeteria (prior to Stonewall) or because the first ever F-to-M conference was held here in the 90s. It should always be part of the GLBTHS mission to document that history...I think the transgender materials are an important part of the collection because they are an important part of SF history and because scholars/film makers, etc are very interested in them.

It is only fitting, then, that a place with such rich transgender history should widely collect materials relating to transgender people.

Throughout my research several people cited Lou Sullivan's participation in the Historical Society as evidence of its inclusion of transgender people. Sullivan is often regarded as a pioneer for female-to-male transsexuality, due in large part to his authorship of the booklet "Information for the Female-to-Male Transsexual" and his founding of FTM International, an FTM group that still thrives today. As Bet Power remarked to me once, "everything starts with him," which is a sentiment that I've heard repeated in countless contexts.

For many people, then, Sullivan's participation in the Historical Society cannot be overstated. As one founding member explained to me, "Lou Sullivan was one of the founding board members. There, it wasn't simply that the organization was concerned about *those* transgender people. Transgender people were part of the power and ownership of the organization from the beginning and so I think that helped set a tone for how the [transgender] material is used and respected." While this sentiment was repeated by a few (notably non-trans) research participants, one transgender-identified participant significantly complicated this portrait. As this participant recalled, "Lou said 'I am here not because I am a transsexual but because I am a gay man' [...] He was a gay man who just happened to be trans."

Since Sullivan was both gay and transgender-identified, his participation in the early days of the Historical Society is a bit more complicated than some might suggest. While one person insists that Sullivan was "a gay man who just happened to be trans," several others cite Sullivan's participation as evidence of the organization's longstanding trans inclusion, notably never mentioning his gay identity. I want to be careful not to fall

on either side of this debate, since I don't believe there is only one correct interpretation of the influences of Sullivan's participation. What this discrepancy does demonstrate, however, is that there are very different ways to tell the history of the Historical Society, each emphasizing different parts of the same story. While this may be true of any history, in this case it is also reflective of shifting theories of sexuality and gender and the investments that individuals often have in representing the history of the Historical Society in a particular way.

Despite Sullivan and Stryker's contributions and the GLBTHS's longstanding commitment to collecting transgender materials, the Historical Society still identifies transgender materials as a lacking collection area. Their current website solicitation reads: "we would like to fill particular gaps in our holdings, and we seek materials documenting GLBT life prior to the 1970s, as well as GLBT people of color, lesbian and bisexual women of all social/cultural backgrounds, GLBT working class communities, and bisexual and transgender people of all time periods" ("Research"). This characterization of the transgender holdings as a "gap" was echoed in my conversations with the archivist. As we discussed this issue, it became clear to me that despite the historical focus on collecting transgender materials, the archives still, to a certain extent, duplicated social hierarchies.

We definitely have holes. Trans people is one of them but people of color is another. Women. Women of color.

K: Trans women of color?

That's right, it could go on forever...We do have a women's committee who is kind of actively seeking out collections and trying to help us with some of the holes we have and so...I think that will be helpful.

At the same time that I was having conversations like the one above, I heard strong statements from other members of the organization that, "we have an amazing collection of transgender [materials] and...are probably peerless in regards to repositories collecting on the Bay Area."

As this back-and-forth suggests, the state of transgender materials at the GLBTHS is a very complicated thing to assess. Like Power's central involvement with the SMA, the GLBTHS also has had prominent members of the transgender community involved in the organization, most notably Lou Sullivan and Susan Stryker. Yet the history of transgender materials and the state of the transgender collection at this archives is represented very differently depending on who is offering their perspective on the issue.

I found myself thinking about these differences as I purchased a tee-shirt to support the Historical Society at their temporary Castro Street museum installation in March of 2009. On the front of this all-black tee-shirt is nothing but the simple slogan "A home for *our* history." Rhetorically, this sentence interpellates the reader of the shirt if they have awareness of who the "our" refers to and counts her/him/hirself among that group. If I had encountered that shirt ten years ago, before the most recent archival name change that included "transgender," I wondered to myself, would I have purchased it? Was I part of the "our" for being queer or for being transgender, perhaps for being both, or maybe for one identity more than the other? The ambiguity obviously convinced me to

buy the shirt, and now to continue to advertise the archive every time I wear it. When I wear it, the “our” is more identifiable—it refers to me, as the person embodying the text on the shirt. What I find so fascinating about this motto is not only its rhetorical fluidity, but also its tone of defiance, similar to the SMA’s “Never Again the Silence.” Both of these statements are strong and direct, almost like promises, which have a responsibility to the communities they speak to and for.

The Historical Society’s slogan “A home for *our* history” also suggests that the archive function to bring people together as a community. One interviewee described the archives as “a queer family,” implying that through the archives GLBT people in the greater San Francisco area can form bonds that transcend everyday connection. The function of the archives as a queer family is also to “protect [donors] and protect their memory.” Particularly since the Historical Society so highly values the collections of everyday queer people, such community partnership and familial bonds are critical to not only the collecting practices of the organization, but its larger political function.

Partly because of this larger political function, the GLBTHS’s responsibility has grown considerably in the past two decades. One volunteer explained to me:

Early on, staying in business meant making sure you could have somebody who could put the stuff in their dining room. So the burden of responsibility that the organization has taken on on behalf of the community was much lower. Now, with one of the premier archival collections on earth, with incredible treasures, with this amazing arc full of memories and stories of our community that would be lost if we don’t

preserve them, the deepest commitment is: make sure the archives is preserved.

The passion that motivates this individual is clear in this excerpt from our conversation, and it seems to accurately capture the organization as a whole. Notably, this person does not mention the monetary value of the collection because that isn't the primary purpose for maintaining the archive. Since the GLBTHS does not purchase materials and is not beholden to one primary funding source, for many who are involved in the organization its worth is determined based on its cultural value rather than its monetary value.

In a YouTube video "Archive Tour," the tour guide claims that, "this organization, because it's queer, also queers the concept of the archive." I followed up on that claim during a few interviews where I asked participants exactly what it would mean to queer an archive and why that was important. In their responses, I learned about the GLBTHS's uncommon collecting practices (e.g., dumpster diving), their valuing of everyday artifacts, their selective adherence and dismissal of professional archiving standards, and their community activism. But for the GLBTHS, queering the archive also signals a broader commitment to inclusion. As one person explained, "So there's a really deep commitment to producing a queer archives, an archives that queered the very structural concept because it had to, otherwise it would be leaving out just like the hegemonic institutions had left out entire swaths of history." As a tool for resisting hegemonic institutions, the Historical Society was almost forced to invent and pioneer new ways of archiving in order to not duplicate the very structures they are working against. This is reminiscent of the famous Audre Lorde quote that "the master's tools will never

dismantle the master's house" (123). Similarly, the Historical Society queers the archive in a form of rhetoric of resistance in order to dismantle the very institutions that required grassroots LGBT archives in the first place.

The National Transgender Library and Archive: "TRANSGENDER MATERIAL IN TRANSGENDER HANDS!"

While the SMA began in the 1970s and the GLBTHS followed in the 1980s, the National Transgender Library and Archive did not emerge until the early 1990s. Founded by the male-to-female transgender activist Dallas Denny, the National Transgender Library began informally in 1991 in Denny's home in Atlanta, Georgia. The NTLA was one aspect of the American Educational Gender Information Service (AEGIS), a non-profit information clearinghouse for transgender issues. In part because this archive is newer than the others, and in part because research participants and materials were considerably more difficult to find, this rhetorical history was much more difficult to write, though no less rich.

As Denny explained to me in an email, the exigency of the collection was in response to what she perceived as a general lack of interest in transgender history; "I started the collection around 1991 because there seemed so little awareness or interest in the transgender community about its history." To offer a brief historical contextualization: 1991 was the year that Lou Sullivan died and the year Power renamed the SMA and broadened the collection scope. "Transgender" had been coined several years before, but it was just beginning to gain its collective meaning around 1991. Given this context, it

was not yet common for archives to be dedicated to collecting transgender materials but the idea of transgender history was not not entirely absent in U.S. culture. At the same time, Denny's collection was, as far as I can find, the first exclusively transgender archive in the United States.¹⁰

By 1995, Denny formed the Transgender Historical Society to oversee the NTLA collection, though I only found minimal evidence of this group's activity. In the prefatory statements to the 1995 and 1997 lists of partial holdings of the NTLA, the Transgender Historical Society is described as being founded in March of 1995 as "a subdivision of AEGIS. Its purpose is to safeguard the materials in the NTLA and provide funds for acquisition, housing, and maintenance of the library's materials." The other function of the Transgender Historical Society was to regularly create and distribute a newsletter, which was named *Shhh! The Newsletter of the National Transgender Library & Archive*. In my research at several archives, I was only able to find a single issue, which was mysteriously labeled volume 2 number 1 from July 1995. After following up with several people, including Denny, and never receiving a definitive answer, I now believe that this was the only issue of the newsletter that was ever created. I interpret this minimal evidence of the Transgender Historical Society and the one-issue run of the newsletter as suggestions that this branch of AEGIS never moved past the beginning stages of organization. I did find one letter in the NTLA written to Denny from an unidentifiable author in June of 1995 that was essentially a contract between one of the co-editors of the

¹⁰ Internationally, the Trans-Gender Archive at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland predates the NTLA in that it was founded, remarkably, in 1986. For more information on the Trans-Gender Archive, see <http://www.gender.org.uk/conf/1990/90ekins.htm>.

newsletter and Denny. But as I mention above, I was not able to find any evidence that this newsletter continued past the single issue from July of 1995.

This single issue of *Shhh!*, however, contains many interesting insights into the original purpose of the collection. First, the cover article announces the formation of the Transgender Historical Society and describes the purpose of the organization:

“Dedicated to the rediscovery, documentation, and preservation of the history of those with transgender issues (transsexual people, transgenderists, crossdressers), and ***above all, to keeping our history in our own hands.***” The last part of the purpose is emphasized in the wording (“above all”) and by using italics and bold. Like my GLBTHS tee-shirt, the “our” in this phrase, repeated twice, interpellates the reader and creates a sense of community and ownership. In this construction, history becomes something that belongs to particular people. Moreover, the use of “in our hands” as a metaphor for having control over history suggests that history is something that can be touched and held by particular people.¹¹

The reason why this control is so important for the author(s) is made clear in a second insightful part of the newsletter—the invocation of the library lady. While perhaps a common stereotype, the library lady is a figure that is conjured as a theme in this newsletter particularly in relation to transgender history. On the front page of the newsletter is an image of a (presumably) white woman whose hair is swept up in a tight bun. She wears a fancy dress and dons thin glasses that make her look stern. She’s positioned behind a desk and is predictably surrounded by books, a bookshelf, and a jar

¹¹ The ability to “touch” history is usefully theorized by Carolyn Dinshaw and is something I will consider at length in chapter five.

of pens. Perhaps most important is her body language—her left hand is positioned in front of her face, with her forefinger up to her lips, indicating to the onlooker to “be quiet!”

This gesture is often accompanied by the sound “shh,” which presumably explains the title of the newsletter. Underneath this image is a cut-out box for people to donate: “Yes! I want to keep our history out of the hands of the Library Lady!”

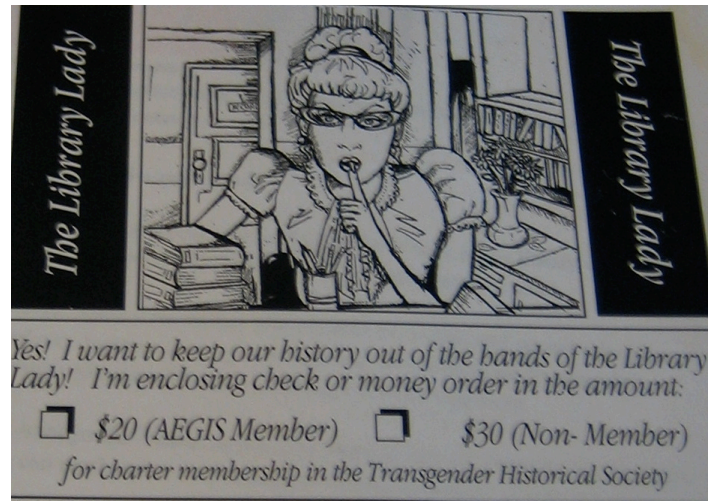


Figure 2: “The Library Lady.” Drawn by Levaughn and published on the front of the June 1995 *Shhh! The Newsletter of the National Transgender Library & Archive*.

Again, the author(s) invoke the communal “our” to describe history and the idea that history can be physically held in hands, though it’s very clear that those hands shouldn’t be the library lady’s.

On the back page of the newsletter, an article titled “About the Library Lady” explains more about this figure and is worth reproducing in full:

The Library Lady wants you to be quiet. The Library Lady wants you to be serious. The Library Lady wants you to leave the books on the shelves and go home and not bother her. The library lady doesn’t want you looking at THOSE kinds of books. There are some nice novels by William Buckley right over there. You want books about WHAT? Obviously, you must have mistaken the library for the dirty bookstore on the corner. We

maintain certain standards of decency, after all. Books like that would excite the prurient interest of the reader, and that's illegal in this town, Buster. Wait a minute—are you a boy or a girl? Don't you DARE move! I'm going to get Mr. Grimsley, and then we're going to go downtown and talk to Chief Murphy and get to the bottom of this. You wait right here. AND KEEP YOUR COTTON-PICKING HANDS OFF THOSE BOOKS UNTIL I GET BACK!

Ah, yes, the Library Lady. Making transgender history accessible to all of us.

The Library Lady didn't care about our history until WE started to rediscover it. Now she wants us to turn it over to her. To this, we say, 'No way. Where was your interest before? TRANSGENDER MATERIAL IN TRANSGENDER HANDS!'

The Transgender Historical Society is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and celebrating transgender history—and above all, to keeping it in our hands rather than turning it over to those who do not appreciate it and who will lose interest in it when something else catches their fancy.

This is serious business! Our history has been stolen from us and scattered, and much of what is left has been appropriated by others for their convenience. We must act now to collect and preserve the books, magazines, articles, films, photographs, playbills, postcards, and memorabilia which constitute our history.

And we need **your help** to do it. Please join today!

Discernible in this article are many layers of complex emotion and politics including trauma, humor, resistance, and parody. This fictionalized library “lady” is a particularly gendered representation of all of the most negative traits that could be associated with a librarian as she is depicted as a stubborn prude with an over-inflated sense of power. It almost seems as if this figure is a caricature developed out of an amalgam of negative library experiences, of those failing to find materials and facing criticism and surveillance in the process. This library lady rhetorically functions to catalyze a response from readers who may have shared part of that traumatic experience, or perhaps readers who want to prevent such experiences from ever happening at all. According to the author, the best response to this figure is to establish independent archives and libraries.

Given this depiction, we can imagine a spectrum of library experiences that catalyzed LGBT archives. On one end would be Kepner with his failure to find any materials on homosexuals. A bit further down we’d find people with experiences like Joan Nestle, who found materials, but had to navigate a card catalog full of negativity. And on the other end, we would locate this experience of a presumably transgender person (“are you a boy or a girl?”), looking for transgender materials, who faced a huge degree of resistance, surveillance, and transphobia from a librarian who acted as a gatekeeper of the library’s materials. This experience was so traumatic, in fact, that the Transgender Historical Society was mobilized to prevent librarians from controlling materials. Not only was this library lady unhelpful in finding transgender materials (which, we might assume, were collected in the library), she attempted to direct the

inquisitor to the famous conservative William Buckley, and after getting more worked up, she instead decided to call in the authorities, Mr. Grimsley and Chief Murphy (notably a female deferral to male authority).

The turning point of this explanation of the library lady is the line, “Ah, yes, the Library Lady. Making transgender history accessible to all of us.” In this sarcastic remark, accessibility is implied to be the primary task of librarians and the figure of the library lady is revealed to be a personification of a variety of access barriers that curtail research on transgender topics. She is the gatekeeper of knowledge and the gender police wrapped into one, though the validity of her authority is undercut as she ultimately decides to call in the higher authority of men.

The Library Lady is further described as suddenly desiring transgender history, and the response of the unknown author is vehement: “TRANSGENDER MATERIAL IN TRANSGENDER HANDS!” The suggestion here is that the best way to allow access to transgender materials is by having it controlled by transgender people. Because of the library lady, while transgender materials may be safely preserved in the library, they are inaccessible and highly controlled. Consequently, any materials that could be made even partially accessible would be an improvement over the library lady.

In addition the theme “Transgender Material in Transgender Hands,” another slogan for the NTLA that I encountered in a few places declared: “The National Transgender Library & Archive is your resource. Please use it and support it” (from NTL&A Partial Holding List, 1995). Taken together, these two mantras might idealize

unlimited access to transgender materials, but like most community archives, the NTLA had significant access barriers.

As one visitor explained to me, the collection wasn't heavily used in the early days "because [Denny] lived sort of out on the periphery of the city...it wasn't easy to get to. Nobody could come just any old time, they had to make an appointment. It wasn't very well advertised that it existed. I mean Dallas mentioned it a few times in her own publications that she was collecting materials and intending to create this master, master archive. But, you know, it just got to be too much for her I think." Besides the limitations of the location and minimal publicity, since the NTLA was a grassroots collection, research sessions were limited by Denny's own availability.

By the end of the 1990s, less than a decade after it began, Denny had collected more than 15,000 materials and had decided that she could no longer maintain the archive. That year, she solicited bids for a new home for the NTLA. A large part of her motive in giving it up was that she was, as a friend of hers told me, "really worried that something would happen to the stuff before it could be properly maintained." The task of finding the NTLA a new home fell to the board of the Gender Education Association (an organizational offshoot off the by-then defunct AEGIS), which was led by Denny and Jamison Green. While continuing the mission of having transgender people maintain control of the materials was one of the evaluation criteria, it was not a requirement for a potential recipient.

In actuality, Denny seems to have had all but decided that she would prefer that the collection be in a much more institutionally stable environment, which essentially

excluded the transgender community and grassroots archives. As one of the GEA board members explained, “we didn’t want our stuff to be suppressed by non-trans people and we wanted to empower trans people....But I think over time what happened in Dallas’ mind was, you know, we didn’t have the resources in the trans community to do what needed to be done and so we needed to not hide it away and, you know, make it potentially harder for people to access by keeping it in transgender hands we needed in fact to branch out, to find allies.” In this light, this decision could be cast as a surrendering of the hope of maintaining independent transgender archives. Access is again identified as a major motivator, but this time it seems that those involved with the NTLA realized that maintaining a transgender archives in transgender hands while providing full accessibility was very difficult to accomplish.

In fact, it may have been because Denny faced such challenges in maintaining the collection that she decided it should go to a different type of setting. One person I spoke with offered exactly that speculation:

[Denny] was kind of like, “ah, I see how difficult it is to keep it in a community-based organization. I am ready to just turn it over now to a really stable institution”...It’s kind of like she was saying, “I was keeping transgender history in transgender community hands and now that I’m not doing this, this process is over and I’m going to give it over to Michigan.” So it wasn’t like an active ongoing collection anymore. It’s kind of like this project is now done and it’s being archived rather than it being at a

community-based archive where the collection would continue to grow in an organic way.

In framing it this way, this participant implied that Denny's choice was simple: keep it in transgender hands and allow it to continue to face all of the challenges of grassroots archiving; or, donate it to a stable, non-transgender institution and consider the project finished. Had the NTLA been donated to another grassroots or non-profit collection, it is likely that more materials would be added. By donating it to Michigan, Denny and the GEA board effectively ended active collecting for the archive.

It's important to note that the GLBTHS was one of the bidders for the NTLA and at the time, Susan Stryker was the executive director of the organization. If Denny and the board of the GEA had a continued commitment to keeping the material in transgender hands (at least at some level), they ostensibly had that opportunity. But, the GLBTHS was selected as the runner-up and was offered all of the material that duplicated the recipient's existing collection. Denny later hinted that one of the reasons why it didn't go to the GLBTHS, though she didn't mention their name directly, was that "We had to think—is it going to be there 50 years from now, or will it always be scraggling for money?" (Dinges). This again implies that since she experienced the challenges of community archiving, she decided it was not the most viable option for the NTLA.

Around 2000, the GEA decided to award the University of Michigan library the NTLA where it would be included in their Labadie Collection, which is devoted to social movements and which includes an extensive collection of sexual freedom materials. As one person on the deciding committee explained to me, "[We were] impressed by the fact

that there was a gender program at UM, and a healthy trans community there, but most of all by the fact that the Labadie seeks material of a controversial nature; for instance, there's an anarchy collection there. We felt that the collection would be intellectually safe there, no matter how political tides turned.” He explained that another benefit was that in this new setting, there wouldn’t be any “ghettoizing of trans content,” meaning that transgender content would be included within a larger collection. Of course, the NTLA’s original mission, “TRANSGENDER MATERIAL IN TRANSGENDER HANDS!” shows that ghettoizing trans content was exactly the point of the NTLA. When transgender content is not ghettoized, the NTLA argued through the figure of the library lady, transgender materials and patrons are vulnerable to a wide range of discriminatory practices.

In the process of applying for the NTLA, the special collections staff at the University of Michigan library were surprised by the “huge transgender community in Ann Arbor” that wrote to encourage the acquisition. I found this perception quite interesting, given that, to my knowledge, Ann Arbor is not known to have an exceptionally large transgender community, but rather one more typical of a mid-sized progressive area. Though most of the researchers who use the collection are from out-of-town, one library staff person speculated that the reason so many people wanted the NTLA at Michigan was because people “develop a sense of ownership of it when it’s in their town, whether they use it or not.” This is particularly interesting in juxtaposition with the GLBTHS, which was formed in a very specific geographic and cultural context. The mobility of the NTLA did not detract from its ability to inspire a type of locational

pride in the materials. Since the collection was not overly geographically specific to begin with (though Denny had certainly favored materials from the U.S. south), it was able to endow pride in the Ann Arbor community, whether or not they used it. This also speaks to the rhetorical uses of archives as a whole—in this case, the particular materials contained within the archives were not as important as the existence and geographic placement of the collection as a whole.

In response to receiving the NTLA, the special collections staff at the University of Michigan library began to collect more transgender material, particularly “little obscure trans youth things” that were not a focus of Denny’s collecting. For a library special collections to take in materials when their space is at such a premium is a clear demonstration of their commitment to transgender materials (it seems that the parodied library lady is not a member of the University of Michigan library staff). When they received the collection, the University of Michigan also held a reception to celebrate the unveiling. At this event, there were some high-profile attendees, including University Provost Paul Courant and State Senator Elizabeth Brater. The collection was awarded a “Special Tribute” from the state of Michigan, which was signed by Senator Brater, State Representative Chris Kolb, and the Governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm.

The student newspaper reported on the event the following day and the article began: “At age 13, Dallas Denny went to the library in her Southern hometown and looked up the words ‘transvestite’ and ‘transsexual’ in the library card catalog. She found two results” (Dinges). Given this biographical insight, it may be safe to assume that the figure of the library lady was catalyzed by Denny’s own experiences. As she spoke at the

event, Denny declared, “Now, someone can be questioning their identity and come to the library” (Dinges). There’s almost an irony in this transformation from such staunch resistance of libraries and the library lady, to a celebration of newfound accessibility of transgender materials. As with the previous accounts of curious and isolated sexual minorities, the library is understood as a resource for a person questioning their identity and it is expected that it can provide that service to visitors. But how much is this expectation shifting in the digital age, with younger queers who seem to have access to many other sources of information?

Navigating a Shifting Landscape

Typically, researchers encounter archives in a single visit—be that a day, a week, or even a few months. Rarely do researchers have the opportunity to witness major archival change in these limited visits, which can take years or happen imperceptibly. As a result, researchers often encounter archives as static repositories whose only existence revolves around our use of them in a particular moment. Yet, archives are constantly in motion and are continually shifting landscapes. While some might grant that collections do expand over time, few consider the ways that already collected materials might be influenced by changes in the archival landscape. This is particularly pertinent for archives that are founded on political motives—such as LGBT archives—since the political context for such archives is perpetually changing.

While it would be difficult for every researcher to become fluent in the history of an archive that she/he/ze works with/in, it would be tremendously useful to have a critical

awareness of the historicity of an archive and the materials contained therein. Barbara Biesecker makes a very similar argument in her article “Of Historicity, Rhetoric: The Archive as Scene of Invention” where she writes, “Indeed, from the *historicity* of the archive, rhetorics; out of the deconstruction of the material presence of the past and, thus, in relation to what the archive cannot *authenticate* absolutely but can (be made to) *authorize* nonetheless, issues an invitation to write rhetorical histories of archives, which is to say, critical histories of the situated and strategic uses to which archives have been put” (130). While the rhetorical histories of archives that I provide above do begin to consider the “situated and strategic uses to which archives have been put,” I am also arguing that before rhetoricians can analyze the uses of archives, we first need to analyze the archives themselves. Because archives are rhetorically designed institutions that are changeable and shifting, researchers would be better positioned to locate materials, recognize archival contexts, and evaluate materials rhetorically if we were invested in keeping such an awareness central to our thinking.

To demonstrate some of the impacts that changing conditions of archives can have, I will draw on the above rhetorical histories to highlight three different elements of archives that can prominently change: the identity of a collection and naming, archival technologies, and the geographical location and focus of an archive. I emphasize these three threads because they are the most prominent examples from my data that illustrate how rhetorical approaches to archives can deepen our understanding of archival research. The identity of a collection and naming is important to consider because of the impacts naming can have on the materials contained in the archive and because of what it reveals

about the perceived and actual audiences. Archival technologies are important to consider because unlike naming, technologies often change without public awareness and given that technology is a necessary conduit between researchers and archival materials, it is critical to consider what role technology plays in the research process. Because using technology is a skill, rhetoricians should treat it as a form of literacy that determines who has access to historical materials. Finally, geographical location and focus are critical ways that researchers can understand the foundational and continuing exigency of collections so that researchers can understand not only the current context and content of an archive, but also prior context and content as well. Without having a basic sense of how archives (particularly grassroots archives) shift location and focus, researchers may not be aware of archival materials and could misunderstand archival context for other materials they use.

Despite their utility here, these three elements should be understood as only a sampling of the many dimensions of archives that are changeable. Like the rhetorical histories themselves, the specifics of these shifting elements are less important than the fact that they all serve as evidence of the overall shifting landscapes of archives.

Identity of a Collection and Naming

The phrase “identity of a collection” is one that I am borrowing from Bet Power, who used it several times in conversations with me to describe the changes that occurred at the SMA. The way I understand it, the identity of a collection refers to the identities and identity politics that guide the collection, access, and outreach practices of an

archive. For the SMA, this concept is easily illustrated by the shift from being an exclusively lesbian collection to one that includes all sexual minorities. Such a shift, as might be expected, has profound impacts on the materials held in that collection.

To take one example of how a change in the identity of a collection can impact researchers, it is illustrative to look at the placement of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* in the SMA. Books are organized at the SMA by in-house classification titles and *The Well of Loneliness* was shelved in the Lesbian Fiction section for decades—fitting for a book that is often touted a lesbian classic.¹² Now that the identity of the SMA has grown to include all sexual minorities, Power has decided to move the book to a newer book classification—Transgender Fiction. This decision is based on the fact that Hall asked to be referred to as John and identified as male during his lifetime. For Power, “the whole reading of *The Well of Loneliness* becomes different now once you know that.”¹³ Though nothing in the book has changed, Power's decision to reclassify it is a dramatic form of rereading and recontextualizing the novel—a type of archival epistemology.

Power certainly isn't the first to claim this novel as a transgender text, but classification of this text as Transgender Fiction in an archives perhaps holds more weight than a single person's opinion because archives are often granted authority. Consequently, a researcher who encounters this text as transgender fiction rather than lesbian fiction would likely trust as truth the classification of transgender. This might also have interesting impacts on a researcher already familiar with the text who, following the

¹² The organizational systems at each archives will be fully explained in the fourth chapter.

¹³ There is admittedly some slippage here between the identity of the author and the genre of the text produced by that author. I am not going to challenge that slippage here, but it does seem useful to note that the apparently seamless relationship between an author and a text might be an assumption more commonly found in LGBT archives and libraries.

norm, interprets it as a work of lesbian fiction. As a consequence, this researcher might engage in earnest reflection about the framing of historical materials through contemporary language and the overlaps and differences between lesbian and transgender communities.

As with my earlier explanations of the ways that archives can be positioned as catalyzing social change, Power understands this movement of Hall's book as inspiring greater change outside of the archives. He explains,

Well I think once collections like that, like ours, take the step to do it, and you're going to see in the transgender selection Ratcliffe Hall's stuff and Gertrude Stein's, it changes everything. Because I really have this belief that the archives are what is changing everything. It's the underpinning of all of the activism. Because it's working with knowledge and concepts and conceptual information and how everyone who comes into an archives thinks about things. And they go out from there and they do their activism.

Like Power, I too credit archives with the ability to shape concepts and knowledge (though I am not quite committed to the claim that they are "the underpinning of all of the activism"). By considering archival logics and classification categories as a type of imposed framework on archival documents, it becomes increasingly clear just how contingent, artificial, and influential those frameworks can be.

The name of an archives itself is a useful gauge of the identity of a collection and can serve as a larger-scale framework that also functions to influence a researcher's encounters with archival materials. On the most simplistic level, by housing a document

in an LGBT archives, a researcher might unconsciously assume that that document relates to an LGBT person somehow. But, is that necessarily the case? Like much in an archival setting, the relation of an artifact to the whole collection is subjective. Power, for example, collects Madonna's albums as part of the SMA, which wouldn't even occur to many archivists of LGBT collections. But Power is making an argument that her music *should* be considered relevant to sexual minorities. If a researcher stumbled upon that album without having a pre-formulated idea that Madonna is neither a sexual nor gender minority, they would likely assume that she is (I don't believe that either reading of Madonna is more or less accurate). It can be easy to take for granted the knowledge that a researcher brings into an archives, but what might seem like common sense or common knowledge to one person can be completely unfamiliar to another. This is an important rhetorical consideration to remember when assessing how the identity of a collection transfers to the documents in that collection in ways that may appear simple, but the justification for which could actually be quite complex.

This phenomenon of transference between the identity of a collection and the documents housed there better explains why the naming debate was so critical for so many people involved in the fight to include bisexual and transgender in the GLBTHS's name. Perhaps some recognized that even though transgender materials were already collected there, since the title was only gay and lesbian, those materials might be misread as gay or lesbian rather than transgender.¹⁴

¹⁴ The naming of an archive and identity of a collection also has important effects on the ways that contemporary researchers identify with the past. I treat this complex process at length in chapter five.

Both of these types of debates—over the identities of particular authors and the naming of archives—illustrate the reciprocal relationship between the archive and the materials collected there, between the container and the contained. Rather than taking sides in these debates, as a rhetorician I find it a more useful position to demonstrate just how much human intervention and interpretation along with theoretical and political contexts are at work in any given archives. What may seem innocuous to a researcher—the name of an archives or a book classification—actually has important influences on the ways that we read the information we find through those means.

Technology

Though I haven't fully explained the variety of archival technologies at work in each archive, a brief and general discussion of the role of technology in archival encounters is necessary here because it is one of the most variable elements in an archival setting. Last summer, the University of Michigan converted their web-based cataloging system. As I've gone back to search for NTLA materials, I've had a vastly different experience in finding what I was looking for. Perhaps more interestingly, the data that I included in my fourth chapter has already become anachronistic because there are no longer distinctions between full and brief records, for example, which is a point I consider at length. Their former system has been replaced with a newer one that includes links to export the record in a number of ways, including emailing, texting, and sending it to refworks or Endnote. The University of Michigan catalog includes a personalized page (similar to a Google homepage) that allows users to create favorites, bookmarks, tags,

and utilize other functions that mirror internet browsing and use more closely. When you do a search, you are also offered a variety of options for narrowing your search criteria (similar to Amazon's system). Then, once you've found a record, you're given a list of similar items and subjects, which could take your research in a related but new direction. Just as e-readers such as Amazon's Kindle provide new, intertextual ways of reading, new library search engines and interfaces change the way that researchers conduct searches. Though I don't yet have the fluency with these systems to fully explore the directions they might take me as a researcher (the perpetual newness of technological innovation seems to create that), it is sufficient to say that technology fundamentally alters the research experience.

While the access technology of the NTLA has changed significantly from its grassroots beginnings to its current academic home, those that govern the SMA and the GLBTHS have been more slow to change. In fact, the technology of the SMA seems to have remained nearly the same in its more than 30 years of existence (that is particularly amazing given how pandemic computers have become in that time). The GLBTHS has maintained a fairly stable in-house FileMaker system, but has taken advantage of grant opportunities to upgrade some of their access technologies. For example, as part of the Online Archive of California, the GLBTHS had the opportunity to convert many manuscript finding aids into EAD format so they would be searchable through an external system. EAD has essentially enabled those particular finding aids to be included in a large database and search engine that culled manuscript collections from a variety of California archives. As a result, finding aids that were previously only accessible in-

house became available on the web for any researcher to use. I personally used this service extensively as I searched for archival materials and I was able to get more familiar with manuscript collections that I was interested in before I even arrived at the archive.

As with the NTLA, I found myself wondering how this distant contact with the GLBTHS and its archival materials influenced the way I would later encounter them in person. How might my experience with the archival technologies shape my later experience with archival artifacts? And how would that experience change if (or, more accurately, when) the technology changed? It is inevitable that access technology evolves, and as a consequence, the relationship between the technology and the material it represents also evolves. Since researchers need to have a certain level of fluency with this technology in order to successfully navigate to the sought-after materials, researchers are also responsible for evolving and adapting to the ever-changing systems. Any research experience is largely mitigated by access technologies, technologies that are always changing, and such changes make all research contextual and somewhat fleeting.

Geographical Location and Focus

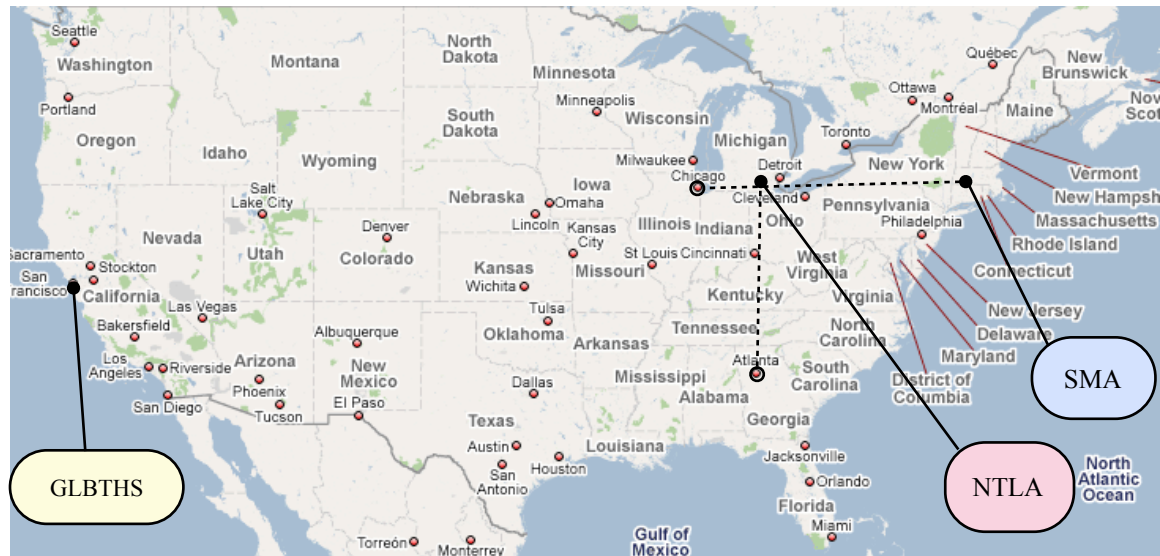


Figure 3: Map showing archival locations. Dotted lines represent movement from the original location. (Courtesy of Google Maps)

While most researchers may expect the access technology of an archive to change, it may seem far less likely that an archive would move geographical locations. Yet for the three archives of this dissertation, they cumulatively moved nine times (see Figure 3 and Appendix C). When an archive moves there are often three primary consequences: 1) a change in the immediate environment, 2) a new regional focus, and 3) a different donation base.

As I explain more in chapter four, the physical space of an archives and its geosemiotics play critical roles in shaping a researcher's encounter with archival material. It almost goes without saying, then, that when an archives moves into a new location, the immediate environment of that archives is completely changed. For grassroots LGBT archives, movement is often into or out of a private residence, which happened with each of the archives that I study in this dissertation. While many academic

archives may share some environmental similarities, private residences are far less predictable in terms of archival environment.

While moving has impacts inside of an archives, an archives can also move in socio-geographic space as well. For example, for the NTLA to move from the garage of a suburban home outside of Atlanta to the graduate library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor represents a significant socio-geographic shift—the state changed, the part of the country changed, the type of building changed, and the kind of town changed, for starters. Similarly, the SMA originated in downtown Chicago and now resides on a riverbank in a country house in western Massachusetts. Both of these moves entail a major change in the geographic context so a visitor to those collections would have vastly different experiences even traveling to get there.

In these new locations, archives often change their regional focus as well. Out of the three archives, only the GLBTHS remained in the same region as it began, though it still expanded its focus from a San Francisco-based collection to one focused on the entire Bay Area. When the other two archives moved, their collecting policies shifted. For the NTLA, active collecting stopped and although Ann Arbor now has a huge resource of transgender materials, no local transgender materials are added to the collection. The SMA, on the other hand, now has two regional strengths—the Chicago area and western Massachusetts. If Power hadn't moved the collection, it is safe to assume that the archives would have continued with a singular focus on Chicago.

Part of the reason why grassroots LGBT archives are so intertwined with their geographic location is because of the donation base. Since the vast majority of materials

in grassroots archives are donated, it's quite predictable that an archives would have a specialization in local history. What this creates, though, are pockets of LGBT historical materials that are often geographically and intellectually isolated from one another. So one challenge that researchers face in accessing LGBT materials is often having to travel to every geographic location where materials might be found relating to hir/her/his interest. Moreover, the onus is on the researcher to discover that a rich resource of materials on Chicago lesbian history is in western Massachusetts. Or, that a major collection of southern-focused transgender materials can be found in Michigan. These histories are often very challenging to discover and most researchers aren't aware of the geographic movement of a specific archive. In fact, I had some difficulty finding information about such moves even when I was specifically looking for it. What this illustrates is that archives are influenced not only by immediate socio-geographical context, but the history of movement that archives undergo.

Conclusion

The argument that I have been developing throughout this chapter revolves around one grand claim—because archives are constantly changing, all archival research is necessarily situated in a particular time and place. While I have focused my attention on archives themselves and the impacts of rhetorical histories and archival changes on researchers, a more theoretical spin on this line of thinking would reexamine archival materials, the contained, as well as the archives, the container. If archives are in motion politically, geographically, ideologically, and spatially, how too are archival materials

experiencing these same movements? Does a text, like *The Well of Loneliness*, actually change as an archives changes? And if it does, what new power might we grant archives as not only keepers of knowledge, but perhaps makers of knowledge as well?

Chapter Four

Desiring Queer Archival Logics:

Organization, Technologies, and the Complexity of “Access”

The rebellion of the archivist against his normal role is not, as so many scholars fear, the politicizing of a neutral craft, but the humanizing of an inevitably political craft. (Zinn 523)

What is access? How does it work? Why does access matter? Answers to these questions would seem to be self-evident to many archivists and archival researchers. Access is the ability to obtain desired materials. It is typically gained by doing a search and requesting the material. It matters because it allows researchers to use archival materials. But are access and accessibility really that simple?

In the influential white paper compiled by Barbara M. Jones for the Association for Research Libraries Task Force on Special Collections, access is defined in the following way:

The term, “access,” for purposes of this report, refers to a means of discovery—through such surrogates as descriptive metadata, word of mouth, and references in literature—that a particular body of information exists. This is coupled with the means of looking at the materials either directly or virtually. Access encompasses the process followed to make materials of all formats available to users; the tools used to publicize materials to potential users; and the openness with which we allow our collections to be used by the public. (Jones 4)

Access thereby involves three components: the process of making materials available, the technology to help potential users find materials, and the availability of the materials for potential users. For a user, access is a two-part process: discovering a particular body of information and looking at it (we'll imagine "looking" in the broadest sense here, despite the privileging of sight in the above quotation). As rhetoricians will be keenly aware, all of these aspects of access are deeply rhetorical—they rely on communicative interactions between users of archives and the people, spaces, and technologies that mediate the finding of archival materials. How access works, then, is a complicated rhetorical process that I will begin to unpack in this chapter.

As the previous chapter elucidates, the three archives in this study have very different and complex histories of political commitments and resistance. Yet despite their differences, all three archives share a very basic element: they have organizational systems that serve to make the materials collected there "accessible" to users. Organizational systems are tools developed by people who imagine a probable audience who will utilize those tools to gain access to archival materials. Consequently, we can understand organizational systems as texts that communicate between archivists and researchers in the rhetorical situation of the archive. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how these archives use organizational systems to make their materials accessible—in all of the complex ways that access might be either attained or prevented. Though organizational systems are designed by archivists and used by researchers, in this chapter I treat the archives as a text that exists, to a certain extent, outside of both researchers and archivists.

I will begin this chapter with a focused material description of the interior space and organizational technologies of the three archives that are the subject of this dissertation. While the rhetorical histories I provided in the previous chapter were rich introductions to the historical evolution of these archives, the descriptions in this chapter will give readers a better sense of how they would encounter the archives today and find materials within them—both spatially and technologically. The implicit argument behind this coupling of space and technology is that there is a direct correlation, indeed interdependence, between the space of each archive and the organizational systems that help users to navigate that space and the materials collected there. I should note that since I originally drafted this chapter less than a year ago, many aspects of the organizational technologies have changed. Given how often technology is updated, I unfortunately cannot continually revise these sections, though I will clearly mark the instances where this has happened. It's interesting to consider how difficult it must be for researchers to maintain technological fluency with archival access systems since I have not been able to research and report on these archival access systems within a year without encountering sweeping changes.

Following this description, I will spend the second section of this chapter unpacking the complexities of “access” as it is both theorized and practiced in the archives. Rather than treating each archive individually, I will provide analysis across these archives by focusing on three elements that complicate access: environmental accessibility, archival language practices, and frustration in the archives. I draw heavily

on interview data in order to show how access gets very complicated when the theoretical ideal of universal access is confronted with far messier material practices.

In the last section of this chapter I will make a theoretical turn and begin to interrogate what it might mean to *queer* access/accessibility by *queering* traditional archival logics. Though archival logics are typically designed to produce efficient and satisfactory research experiences, I will make the queer move to ask: what's wrong with frustration? Could archives embrace dissatisfaction? By flipping this logic and interrogating queer archival logics, I hope to show that access is not merely a simple process of making items available, nor is it necessarily a universally shared goal.

Organizational Technologies and Archival Space

In this section, I provide descriptions of the space and technologies of each of the three archives. As I explain above, my coupling of space and technology implicitly argues that there is an interdependence between archival environments and the access technologies employed there. Throughout this description there will be many places that are ripe for analysis, but I am intentionally deferring that analysis until subsequent sections of this chapter. More specifically, in the section titled "Complicating Access," I will directly address the rhetorical implications and consequences of these environmental and technological elements of archives. This introductory section is meant to be predominantly descriptive and is intended to provide readers with a clear sense of what researching at each of these archives would be like.

The Sexual Minorities Archives: A Grassroots Residential Archive

The SMA is currently located in a three-story house on the shore of the Connecticut River in Northampton, Massachusetts. Archival materials permeate nearly every room (save the kitchen and one bedroom). Upon walking in, a visitor enters into the foyer and sees a record/music collection directly at their feet. To the left is the book room where the wall



Figure 4: Home of the SMA. (photo by author)



Figure 5: Four corners of the book room. (photos by author)

space is lined with full bookshelves, above which buttons, stickers, magazine covers, art, and other memorabilia hang on display.

Through the book room toward the back of the house is the first periodical room which is dominated by a large rack for current issues. This rack faces the subject file cabinets and the audio/visual materials and is surrounded on all sides by stored older issues of periodicals. Behind this room, in the far back corner of the house, is the archival storage room which contains Power's personal files and several bins of unprocessed materials. The adjacent bathroom even displays archival materials—tee-shirts hang from the towel rack and images are posted on the walls.



Figure 6: Entering the first periodical room. (photo by author)

On the second floor there are three bedrooms, only one of which serves as an actual bedroom. Of the other two rooms, one room is a study that has a computer that visitors can use for internet access. The room across the hall is a second periodical room that contains shelves of archived periodicals and an extensive poster collection. The upstairs bathroom, like the bathroom on the first floor, is decorated with archival material, mostly postcards, which hang on the walls.



Figure 7: First floor bathroom.
(photo by author)



Figure 8: Second periodical room. (photo by author)

Since Power's residence was not designed specifically to house archival materials, he has had to adapt the space in many ways to tailor it to that function. Not only does this mean that he has invested in furniture necessary for archival needs (shelving, racks, file cabinets, etc.), but he has consciously worked to make the space as physically accessible as possible. For example, Power keeps a ramp on the front porch which can be set up over the front stairs to make the first floor accessible to people in wheelchairs. Beyond this basic accommodation though, Power's commitment to keeping the archival materials accessible actually seems to be at odds with the limitations of the space of his house:

For a long time I resisted putting these shelves where they were [pointing to tall ones]. It's still accessible on the first floor and I resisted putting materials on the second floor because I wanted it all wheelchair accessible and that's why the shelves are low. They are not all the way up to the ceiling...so now I am at this point where it's halfway accessible and I am

willing to go and get materials from the second floor and bring them down if someone comes in here in a wheelchair.

The tension between his commitment to physical accessibility and the space of his house is clear in this quotation; as the collection expands, Power is forced to compromise the accessibility of some materials.

This access issue is connected to the larger problem of not having enough space in the house to comfortably archive all of the materials. Power explains:

If this were well funded and it was a wealthy collection then...we could take out of the boxes all of the clothing...you don't see any of the clothing that people have donated here. Where're we gonna hang it? Where're we gonna put it? How are we gonna protect it from light? So it's hidden away. You don't see the huge banners that we have from all the pride marches because they're protected in a bin and they're folded and you have to sort of go in there and...but they're not displayed is what I'm saying.

Power has an ongoing concern to preserve and protect all of the materials in the archives. Faced with the decision to display materials that cannot be protected from light or keep them stowed away, he decides to keep them protected in a bin. Of course, this makes those materials invisible and difficult to access without Power's assistance, but that is just one of the many difficult decisions about the collection that Power faces.

Another pressure that Power feels about the space is the inevitability of running out of it. He jokes, "Something's gotta be in the attic and I hope it's not me!" In this jest Power shifts agency to the collection as if he has no control over its continued growth.

His house seems to be a constraint for the collection because it has material limits and borders that prevent endless expansion. In his joke, it sounds as if Power's battling the archives for space in his house and if he loses, he'll end up in the attic. As a mindful archivist, Power is well aware that by putting archival materials in the attic he greatly shortens their life, so it may be that he is faced with a difficult decision one day when he is forced to choose between his own comfort and the preservation of the materials.

Just as Power adapted his residential space to function as a grassroots archive, the organizational system of the SMA is also uniquely designed to adapt to the materials collected there. When the SMA was first established in 1974, founder J.R. Roberts created a grassroots cataloging system to describe the books that were being collected. She created her own subject headings and coding system to describe the books in a way that made sense to her and that aligned with the politics of the lesbian separatist organization of which they were a part. Roberts used book classifications that were both practical and political and when Power assumed control of the collection, he continued her tradition of political naming.

For example, Power explains, "all of the books about LGBTs and our relationship to psychiatry has been classified MIS, Mental Illness System. That's political naming. All the books...about incest or rape or abuse of women or females are either CAW, Crimes Against Women, or CAG, Crimes Against Girls. That's political naming...HER, Herstory..." As this partial list begins to demonstrate, the book classifications at the SMA function as a lens that communicates to visitors and positions the materials in particular

ways. Instead of a label such as “rape” or “incest,” which some visitors might find painful or violent to encounter, Crimes Against Women positions women as the subject of that literature (which takes a side in the shifting of blame between the victim and the aggressor in crimes against women and girls). Another classification that is clearly political is BUL, Bullshit, which labels the SMA’s collection on homophobic and/or transphobic literatures. Though Power feels that it is important to collect these materials, he is careful to situate them as “bullshit” so that a visitor would not encounter them neutrally.¹

In describing Roberts’ motives, Power says,

She thought that by its nature [the Library of Congress subject headings] would make the collection part of a mainstream society that she wasn’t necessarily in agreement with. She wanted to be more original and creative and for everything about this archive to come into being from queers, from the thinking of queers, from her own thoughts, and from others that she worked with in the archives...And she was a working class woman, and you know, so she was very grounded in realism and in sort of user friendly, how are people going to find what they need, you know, and some code on a spine that was numbers was not going to really be intuitive. So, first decision was to put it, to put the books in subject, subject categories, and to name them. And in the naming itself, it’s actually, I think the naming of some of these names have become political.

¹ A perhaps unintended consequence of this politically-charged classification system is that it foregrounds the subjectivity inherent in all categorization and labeling efforts. I’ll return to the impacts of these systems at greater length later in this chapter, when I focus on language-based accessibility more specifically.

It is important to recognize that Roberts developed a ground-up system not merely for convenience or internal politics but to resist mainstream society and to uplift queer thinking about queer materials. In other words, Roberts was enabling a queer archival epistemology that treated queer materials from a queer perspective.

To this day, Power has maintained most of the original subject headings and has continued to add some as the collection grows. For a rare few, Power revised Roberts' original subject headings to better reflect contemporary politics and the changing political landscape. The best example of this is his decision to change Roberts' original

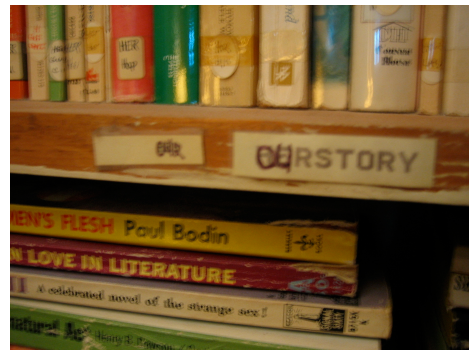


Figure 9: Shelf label of “Ourstory.”
(photo by author)

subject heading of “Herstory” (recalling the popular feminist revision of “history”) to “Ourstory” in an effort to be more inclusive of all of the materials that might be collected under that heading, not just the ones about women. As Figure 9 shows, these changes are also done in a grassroots fashion—with a pen, writing over the original label on the shelf.

These book classifications are collected in an in-house word file that is updated semi-regularly. As of November of 2000 (with no recent update to my knowledge), the SMA has 49 book classifications for the main collection of books. The reference shelves have another 11 classifications that serve as a starting point for users who want to begin their research with listings of the materials. Aside from these classifications, there is no list of the individual books kept at the SMA so if a researcher wants to find a book, they would look for it on the shelves.

The periodicals at the SMA are separated into current and archived issues. The current issues are displayed on a large magazine rack in the first periodicals room. Older issues are archived in nearby boxes which are sorted alphabetically according to the periodical title. The only type of periodical that has further description is SM (SadoMasochism), which contains warnings of the contents so that a person could offer their consent before viewing the materials. A complete periodical holdings title list (again, not done by individual issue) is maintained as a ~18 page word document.

The SMA also has two large subject file collections—one for lesbian materials and one for transgender materials. The subject files are also built on a grassroots system in that each folder is labeled by Power or a volunteer to accommodate a particular artifact. In other words, the files are built out as materials need to be archived—they are not pre-made to await new materials. Typically, these files begin with a general label (e.g., “Asian Transgenders”) and include an additional classification with the linking word

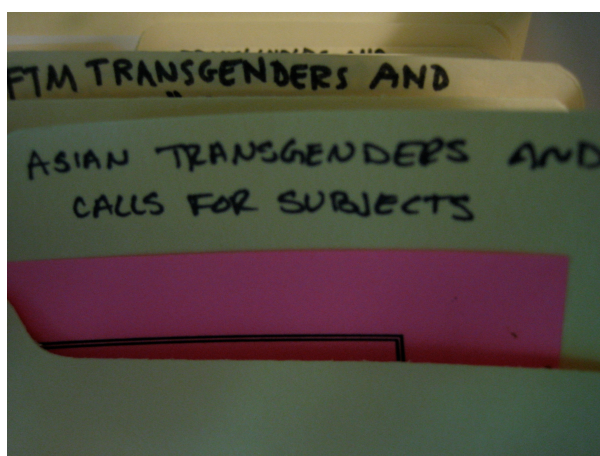


Figure 10: Transgender subject file folder. (photo by author)

“and.” As Figure 10 shows, these labels are also done by hand. The materials in the subject files are not listed in any system outside of these files.

I spoke with one former volunteer at length about the process of creating subject files at the SMA, which she often did in collaboration with

Power. She explains the process in colorful detail:

So I would just like basically take out the Tupperware bins, put them on the table, and then just start reading them...and then decide, does it go into a folder that already exists? Do we make a new folder? What's the main point about this? Who would be looking for it? Okay...what do I put this under?...I would ask Bet a lot of what he thought I should do. Some of them...it's hard to know, it's like...okay, what's the most important thing being talked about here?...And sometimes you'd be like okay, well I have a letter here from someone saying that this particular doctor is like really like awesome for like for sex change surgery, sexual reassignment surgery, and that they were so good and this place was really supportive, and blah blah blah, do we put it with that place? Or do we just put it under surgery in general? Because maybe someone's coming and they want to know about surgery and it may be good for them to know this is a good place? But maybe someone's going to that place already and they want to know so they...which one do you put it under?...You're trying to think, like, oh my god, here's this hypothetical person who's going to go through this huge change and I don't know if they're going to like find this letter, like, telling them where a good place to be is...It's like really stressful sometimes [laughing]. But sometimes not. Sometimes it's just brochures for like a trans party that happens every year and you're just putting it in the same file. And, so the work itself is not glamorous, really. You're just

sitting at a table with like Bet's cats and like maybe a bowl of nuts and...

yeah, so, it's yeah it's not glamorous I guess, but it's important.

This long description is very insightful into the often collaborative process of creating that SMA subject file system. The volunteer's imagining of the "hypothetical person" who might use the files is a rhetorical exercise that encourages the volunteer to feel a great deal of responsibility toward this person.

Like the book classifications, the SMA subject files are future-oriented and designed around imagining potential users of these materials. Though labeling historical artifacts may seem to be more often a task focused on best representing those in the past, this process demonstrates that archival organizational systems can often be intentionally and rhetorically designed to anticipate future users. Processing can involve a great deal of guesswork as to who might be using a collection and for what purpose. This process seems to have added weight at the SMA because a handwritten organizational system is not as revisable or updatable as a computer-based system.

In sum, there is no comprehensive database or searchable program for the materials at the SMA. What is available are listings of periodical titles and book classifications, which would assist a researcher in finding the general area to begin searching. The specific book titles, periodical issues, and other archival contents are not database searchable. Also available are subject files that are created by Power and volunteers who try to anticipate how they will be used. Aside from these aids, a researcher could find materials the old-fashioned way—by browsing the shelves, boxes, and drawers that are all available for this purpose. In fact, the lack of finding aids may

force researchers to be less set on finding particular objects and more inclined to follow archival traces and threads inductively. Unlike more institutional archives, researchers can “see” this collection and move through it at their will. This system allows for a different kind of access and a different kind of research process than more institutional archives. As one researcher described it to me, she happily experienced the SMA as “organized chaos,” which seems to be a fitting oxymoron to describe the state of the SMA’s organizational system and the research process there.

The GLBT Historical Society: A Non-Profit Professional Archive

The GLBT Historical Society is located on Mission Street in downtown San Francisco, California. Their offices, museum, and archive space are all in contiguous rooms on the third floor of an office building. The archival materials are housed in a large room isolated on one side of the building, which is not open to the



Figure 11: Outside of the GLBT Historical Society. (photo by author)

public. This room is set up like a large warehouse with many rows of tall metal shelves all filled with acid-free boxes containing archival materials. In one corner, unprocessed materials are stacked high and deep along with artifacts that will not fit on shelves (e.g., Harvey Milk’s famous barber chair that he kept in his camera shop). An adjoining room



Figure 12: Storage room. (photo by author)

in this private section of the suite is maintained to house the photo collections. Also in this area is the archivist work station and a large table and computer station for volunteers to work on processing collections.

Adjacent to the storage room is a reading room where researchers work with materials. The wall that separates the reading room and storage room is dominated by a large window which provides a two-way view between the rooms. Around the reading room are useful research tools—reading placeholders, binders of finding aids, a computer for access to the databases, white gloves for handling materials, a copy machine, etc. The middle of the reading room is dominated by a large table that could comfortably seat about six researchers. Though I typically had this space to myself, I’ve heard from some researchers that it isn’t uncommon to see the reading room full during Saturday open research hours.



Figure 13: Harvey Milk's barber chair. (photo by author)

Continuing away from the archives warehouse are offices, a museum, and an event space. Though the majority of the archival materials are kept in the storage room, historical artifacts are strategically placed throughout the entire suite. Unlike the SMA's use of every available wall and floor space, the Historical Society feels more airy and

open and the artifacts that are displayed seem carefully chosen. The GLBTHS has the feel of a well-crafted museum and their professional decor is maintained throughout the entire suite, though particularly in the area that is a specifically dedicated museum.



Figure 14: Central foyer of the GLBTHS suite. (photo by author)



Figure 15: Dedicated museum space. (photo by author)

The GLBTHS does not have the physical accessibility concerns that are so important to Power; the GLBTHS is located in an office building where there is an elevator that can be easily accessed from the street level and all materials are provided upon request. One concern that was expressed to me about the space was visibility. Because the suite is located on the third floor, it isn't very visible to street traffic. This is somewhat offset by sandwich board signs that are set up on the sidewalk and on a nearby street corner, and the sign for the Historical Society on the door, but it is still not a location that readily invites walk-in visitors.

Another concern of the GLBTHS, which is common to most archives, is the inevitability of running out of space. It may seem to visitors of the Historical Society that there is ample room for archival materials since the main areas are free from clutter. But upon speaking with both the archivist and volunteers, it became clear to me that the

Historical Society is a space-stressed organization, which has an impact on their processing, collection scope, and the accessibility of the materials that are there. As one volunteer explained to me, “due to space issues I don’t think that we are accessioning very many collections.” As this comment reveals, space can be deterministic in shaping the collection and is an important factor in the decision-making process regarding the acquisition of new materials. This may seem like a self-evident statement to most archivists, but for a non-profit GLBT historical society that depends on grant and donation money, there seems to be a more pervasive attention to the delicate balance between continuing to collect new materials and exceeding space and financial constraints.

The GLBT Historical Society has a blend of organizational systems that are both online and in-house.² There are two online searchable systems: CatalogQ and the Online Archive of California (OAC). CatalogQ (<http://www.catalogq.net>) was a grant-funded project that established an online search engine for periodical holdings in several California GLBT repositories. CatalogQ has a very basic interface that allows users to search by title, author/publisher/organization, subject, geographical location of publication, or repository. Successful searches in CatalogQ result in a record detail that

² The GLBTHS’s organizational system has changed considerably since my original research there and my initial drafting of this chapter. The most prominent change that I am aware of is a new online database where researchers can search the archival collections (see: <http://www.glbthistory.org/research/index.html>). While search results from this database do not provide full-text finding aids, they do allow researchers to quickly search the collection for the basic manuscript collections and descriptions. I anticipate that this will soon be linked with the online finding aids hosted by the Online Archive of California, initiating what may become a process of fully digitizing their finding aids. My subsequent analysis of their organizational systems is still relevant, however, given that this online search engine does not replace the in-house system, but supplements it.

includes the most basic information: title, publisher, subtitle, language, publication history, subject headings, repository, and holdings. This information, while guided by the Society of American Archivists's guidelines for archival description, was also adapted to

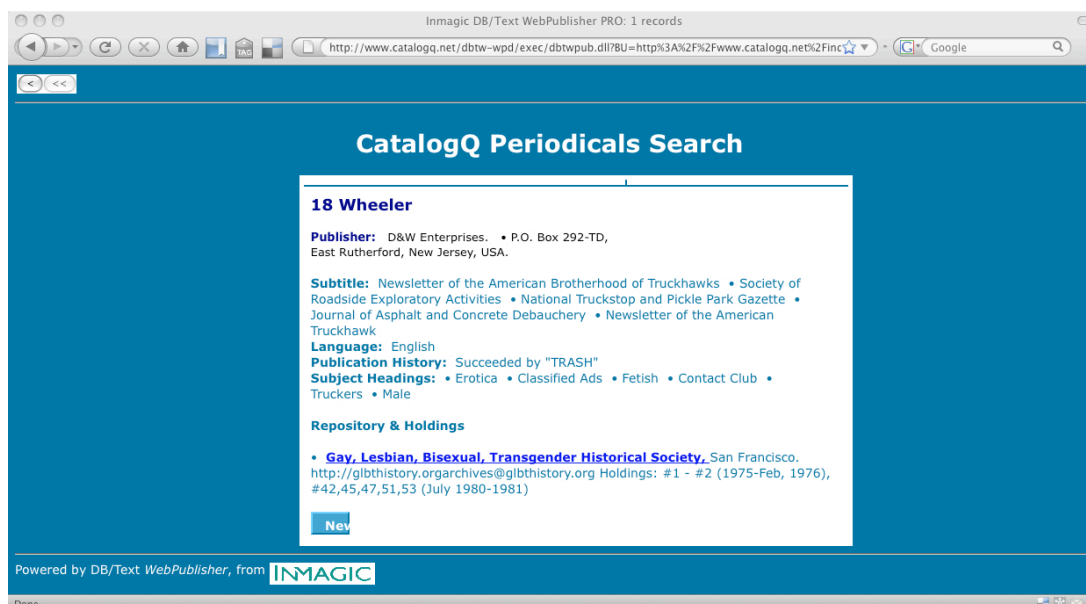


Figure 16: Screen shot of a CatalogQ search result (February 19th, 2009).

meet the particular needs of this collection. As one long-time volunteer explained it to me:

That group [creating CatalogQ] had to come up with its own nomenclature in order to produce topical categories that would actually serve the research and cultural needs of queer people. Because if you pull out the set of available categories in Library of Congress descriptions, they will be...currently they will be useless and slightly quaint and 15 years ago they would have been horrific, archaic, oppressive, and from our point of view, bizarre...It would all have been this bizarre psychoanalytical, you know, oppressive, controlling of nasty deviance, which wouldn't really

make for very useful research. It's like but...I want to find out about lesbian SM. How am I going to do that? How am I gonna, you know, find effeminate hippies? You know, that's the category I need to look up. You know, that's just in the catchall deviancy, not too useful.

Like Power, this volunteer invokes the idea of the hypothetical person conducting research. In the actual interview, as he shifted to the first person researcher ("I want to find out about lesbian SM"), he raised the pitch of his voice with a whiny tone of mock frustration. He positions the invented nomenclature used in CatalogQ, then, as a form of resistance against the Library of Congress descriptions and what he sees as the useless system of labeling everything "deviancy." In his view, CatalogQ's organizational system prevents that frustrated researcher from materializing at all and makes the periodicals more accessible to projected researchers.

The OAC is also a collaborative, grant-funded project that brings together the manuscript holdings of many different California repositories (not limited to GLBT collections), though it is far more formal and detailed than CatalogQ. The OAC utilizes Encoded Archival Description (EAD) to enable collection finding aids to be fully searchable through online interfaces. EAD is essentially a standard input format for manuscript collection finding aids which provides for fully search capability and easy transportability. To create a finding aid with this level of detail is extremely time-consuming and can result in aids that exceed 30 or 40 pages. There are many benefits to this system but perhaps the most crucial for researchers is that these aids are fully searchable so that a researcher isn't limited to subject terms or title/author searches, as

might be the case with a database like CatalogQ. Instead, a search of an EAD finding aid is comprehensive of the entire aid so it will pull up minor hits from within the aid as well. Another benefit for researchers is that EAD creates a standard style for online finding aids, which means that researchers can become more proficient readers and interpreters of the information provided within the aid. The GLBTHS has 78 finding aids accessible through the OAC, though this only represents a small fraction of their full manuscript holdings (~630 collections). Other manuscript collection finding aids are available as printed copies, which are stored in the reading room of the archives, when available.

In addition to these two online systems, the GLBTHS also has six searchable in-house searchable filemaker databases. These include databases for manuscripts, posters, tee-shirts, obituaries, oral histories, and sites (locations). It is noteworthy that these databases are not cross-searchable. In other words, there is no single place where a researcher could search the complete collection of the GLBTHS. All of these databases are styled after the Society of American Archivists's standard for archival material, but do not fit those guidelines in any neat or simple fashion.

Colloquially referred to as *DACS* but fully published as *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*, the Society of American Archivists's current guidelines for describing archival material were only just released in 2004. Already widely accepted, *DACS* has been extensively praised for being a user-friendly, transportable and adaptable content standard. *DACS* has twenty-five elements that are outlined for the description of archival material and particular archives can make use of as many or as few of these elements as they prefer, often depending on the specific material they are describing. According to the

introduction, “The principal objective of archival description is the creation of access tools that assist users in discovering desired records” (xvii). According to the Society of American Archivists, then, these elements constitute an ideal and adaptable system that eventually provides access tools to help users discover materials collected in an archive.

The use of SAA endorsed description tools is a complicated practice at the GLBT Historical Society, as I hinted at above in my discussion of CatalogQ. Since *DACS* was only just released in 2004, the majority of the GLBTHS’s processed collection was not processed with any of those guidelines in mind. Even with SAA’s earlier guidelines (notably not as comprehensive as *DACS*), the GLBTHS has always had to balance following these standards and providing the best description of the materials. I had a rich conversation about this tension with the same volunteer who explained the created nomenclature of CatalogQ. He said:

The Historical Society has been lucky in one sense in that unlike some of the other community based archives we did have professional librarians and archivists involved from the beginning. So certain of the practices of the organization have always reflected the standards of the Society of American Archivists in terms of preservation, organization, and description of collections. But of course queer people just can’t obey the rules. Or we find a way to make them better or fancier or nicer or prettier or you know, more fun or something. So the collection has escaped that set of limitations not in abandoning it, but in expanding upon it in a variety of ways. So certainly the fact that we have a collection of nearly 3,000

imprinted tee-shirts. Well the Society of American Archivists doesn't really have a tee-shirt archiving standard. So there we had to invent our own...

K: So it's sort of like a working with the professional standards but also working against them or having to compensate for them when they are sort of falling short?

Precisely. Precisely. To find ways of going beyond those limited standards. And at the same time respecting the basic foundation of them and saying we have to do this according to standard professional practice when standard professional practice is the right way to do it...So at various points in terms of both description and the foreseeable use of the collections, conventional professional practices for archives were not adequate. They weren't necessarily an obstacle but they didn't really go far enough. And how queer is *that*?

Though both the SMA and GLBTHS were founded by professional archivists, those founders chose to work with the professional standards in different ways. While Roberts entirely abandoned the standards, the GLBTHS founders created a hybrid of adherence and revision. This volunteer attributes it to queer people who "just can't obey the rules," but in many ways it is necessary because there are times when the SAA description standards are either not available or not useful. At times, this is a result of the manuscript-focus of *DACS*, whereas queer archives can be dominated by ephemera. His description of the GLBTHS as "going beyond" SAA standards suggest that the GLBTHS's archival

practices are actually improvements on or better than the SAA standards. His rhetorical question, “how queer is *that?*” is an implicit critique of the SAA’s failure to be adaptable to queer archival contexts.

In practice, the GLBTHS’s system of archival description has both benefits and limitations. As an archivist explained to me, “we don’t use subject headings. You know, which is good and bad. I mean subject headings are really limiting. But then also it doesn’t give you a good way of concisely identifying...Like if somebody was looking for a certain subject, I’d have to a key word search, which is a hit and miss. So depending on who wrote the description...” In conversation, she tailed off at the end of her thought, implying that there’s an uncertainty and unevenness in the descriptions of materials that impacts the accessibility of those materials in research practices. Notably, the decision not to use subject headings is not particular to the GLBTHS, but is in alignment with SAA standards.

At the GLBTHS, the actual item-level descriptions within a given content standard are provided ideally by archivists, but they are often done by volunteers. As a result, the descriptions do not use standardized language and as a consequence, doing a general search can be a hit-or-miss process. Another complication is that volunteers who process the collections are often not professionally trained and therefore don’t apply the SAA standards evenly. Nor, I imagine, would they have time to do so even if they were trained. With approximately 80 percent of the collection unprocessed, the priority of the Historical Society is understandably to make as many materials as possible available on a basic level, rather than fewer materials available with full-level processing and

description.³ The impacts that this complicated process has on the accessibility of archival materials are also, understandably, complicated.

In sum, the GLBT Historical Society has a blend of in-house and online search systems. There is no single database where a patron could search the entire collection. Instead, there are six databases that are for specific types of artifacts. As an organization, the GLBTHS follows the description standards offered by the Society of American Archivists, but revises those and works against them when necessary.

The National Transgender Library and Archive: A University Collection

Unlike the SMA and the GLBTHS, the NTLA is not all maintained in the same physical location. Instead, the NTLA is dispersed throughout the University of Michigan Libraries on the Ann Arbor campus. The most concentrated part of the collection is kept in Special Collections on the seventh floor of the Harlan Hatcher Graduate library. The Special Collections research room is very similar to those of other universities where I have researched—a librarian sits at a desk near the front of the room, long tables are neatly arranged with chairs facing the front, and research supplies are neatly stowed around the edge of the room. The atmosphere is very quiet and researchers are asked to leave their belongings in a cubby while they work. Like the GLBTHS, the Special Collections department of the University of Michigan library lacks visibility; it would be very rare for someone to stumble into the reading room without intending to go there in the first

³ This is consistent with recommendations made by Green and Meissner in an article published in *The American Archivist*, which I will discuss in more detail below.

place.⁴ Moreover, as one librarian described it to me, the reading room may seem to be a “formidable working place,” so it is unlikely to be a welcoming environment for less serious researchers.

Also in contrast to the SMA and GLBTHS, I do not have any pictures of the University of Michigan library or the Special Collections reading room. Though I visited the NTLA after the SMA and knew that I wanted to do some analysis of the space of the archives, I did not feel comfortable taking pictures there. In part, this was probably because it was already such a familiar environment; I had conducted archival research in a handful of other university-based collections that were remarkably similar. In this case, the tendency to only take pictures of things that are different and foreign was detrimental to my research. But in the moments when I did consider taking photos, I was uncomfortable doing so. The reason for that within Special Collections is obvious—there are surveillance cameras and I feared reprimand. If I were able to revisit the collection on another research trip, however, I would be more assertive about taking pictures and capturing the space.

Researchers who wish to work with the NTLA materials kept in Special Collections are required to use the reading room and there they can only work with the specific material they request. Not only is it the Special Collections policy to request all materials, but because many of the NTLA materials are kept in an off-site storage facility, requests often have to be made several days in advance. Like many libraries, the University of Michigan maintains an off-site, limited access warehouse that houses a

⁴ For those that have visited the Syracuse University Special Collections Research Center, it is a very similar environment.

large amount of the library's materials. Such a setup offers several benefits for an archival collection, including added security and better preservation practices. One of the consequences, however, is that there is no place a visitor could go to "see" the collection since it is not kept together. As one library employee explained to me, "...every donor wants their stuff to be kept together in the same room with a big name plate [laughing]. I mean that's very common, but rarely ever agreed to because there's just not enough space to do that."

A second consequence of having materials in off-site storage is that it is often the most controversial items that are sent there first, at least for those that are stored in publicly accessible stacks.⁵ James V. Carmichael Jr. explains that this decision often curtails "the serendipitous delight of stack browsing" (69). It also means that researchers are forced to ask another person for the materials they are seeking, which can be an embarrassing encounter for some researchers.

For the original board who decided to donate the NTLA to the University of Michigan, this dispersal of material was certainly a drawback. As a board member explained to me, "[the dispersal is] a little frustrating but comparing that to the idea that there was no way you could get at it at all or that it would be locked up in some basement somewhere and no one would ever see it again..." the Michigan context was obviously better. For this person, the choice was between accessible materials that were dispersed and inaccessible materials that are kept together. While in some ways this is an exaggerated binary because of the extremity of either possibility, I have no doubt that it

⁵ I am not sure if this is true for the University of Michigan, but it is a general tendency for many other libraries.

seemed to the board to be two very opposing options. Though the University of Michigan library was not able to keep all of the materials physically together, they are able to offer a degree of accessibility that far surpasses a locked up basement.

While the whole collection cannot be “seen,” there are parts of the NTLA collection that can be visually experienced. I spoke with one person who had helped to process and catalog the collection who told me about a particularly powerful moment when she encountered part of the collection; “...one moment that stood out was going to the stacks, to the HQs and seeing the overflowing shelves in the transgender section. That made me smile.” The fast and voluminous influx of transgender materials pushed against the confines of the library space available and made a visual statement. This interviewee experienced that visual as a testament to the size of the donation, but a patron who is unaware of the NTLA would not be able to make such a connection.

The only way to “see” the entire NTLA collection is via the online library catalog, which is at a greater distance from the materials than at either the SMA or GLBTHS. Typically, a person would first encounter NTLA materials via the online University of Michigan Library catalog, Mirlyn.⁶ This catalog is in fact the only way to discover all of the materials that are considered part of the collection, though it is not possible to parse out which items were part of the original donation and which were later added. To browse the entire collection, a person can search the catalog using the key words “National

⁶ Since I originally drafted this section, the University of Michigan library catalog, Mirlyn, has been dramatically overhauled, comparable to the changes to the Syracuse University library catalog. Though much of my data is still relevant, I will indicate updated information in footnotes, rather than revising the original text, so that readers can get a sense of how much this system has changed in the past year.

Transgender Library” as a phrase. As of February 17th, 2009, this search yields 1,276 hits that contain that phrase in a “copy-specific note.”⁷ The only materials that are given this note are the ones from the original donation and those that have been subsequently donated by Dallas Denny. This basic search can be easily refined with the drop down menus listed below the search fields to limit based on language, dates, format, location, or collection.

Once a particular item of interest is found, the link to that item can be clicked, which will take the researcher to a full record of that item, as in Figure 17.⁸ This research system is used in many university libraries and is not tailored in any way for the NTLA. Included in this full record are several links which would bring the researcher to a number of related areas, either the author/creator’s other works, other items under the same Library of Congress subject headings, or tags that other users have added.⁹

The tagging system, called MTagger, has only been in place for a few years but has already accrued 2,916 unique tags (as of February 17th, 2009).¹⁰ In short, MTagger allows tags, or labels, to be added to any webpage within or outside of the Mirlyn

⁷ While researchers are still able to conduct the key word searches, it is considerably more difficult to find the “copy specific note” that indicates that materials were originally part of the NTLA donation. When I execute the same search today, January 15th, 2010, I receive 1,301 hits, though I am unable to account for the 25 new records in the current search result.

⁸ This record can still be found within the system, but it requires a user to navigate to the “Mirlyn Classic” option on the top menu of the advanced search webpage. The major improvement to the current search engine is that when a user conducts a search that results in many positive hits, there is a column of limiting parameters on the left-hand side (it’s actually quite similar to the search engine of Amazon.com), which allows for more narrowing options within an initial search.

⁹ These same links are still available in the newer record of any given item, but there are also more links that are now available due to an added column of suggested “Similar Items” that is on the left-hand side of every record page.

¹⁰ As of January 18th, 2010, that number has grown to 4,779 tags on 5,707 items, added by 1,239 users. To learn more about MTagger, visit <<http://www.lib.umich.edu/mtagger/tags/faq#aboutmtagger>>.


catalog. As a whole system, this creates a large tag cloud of the 2,916 tags that MTagger



Ann Arbor and Flint : FULL RECORD

This Record: [Print/Export/Mail This](#) [Save to My Shelf](#)

Format: [Full Record](#) [Printer Friendly](#) [Named Tags](#) [MARC Tags](#)

[How to "Get This"](#)



Title	Transgender warriors : making history from Joan of Arc to RuPaul / Leslie Feinberg .
Holdings	What Libraries Have
Author	Feinberg, Leslie, 1949-
Published	Boston : Beacon Press, c1996.
Format	Book
Description	xvii, 212 p. : ill. ; 28 cm.
Subject-Lib. Cong.	Transsexualism -- History. Transvestism -- History. Gender identity -- History.
Copy-Specific Note	spec: From National Transgender Library & Archive. ugl: From National Transgender Library & Archive.
Bibliography/Index	Includes bibliographical references (p. 195-197) and index.
LCCN	95033421
ISBN	0807079405
OCLC number	(OCoLC)ocm33014093
Location	Hatcher Graduate HQ 77.9 .F451 1996 
Location	Special Collections - Labadie Collection - 7th floor S Hatcher HQ 77.9 .F451 1996 
Location	Shapiro Undergraduate HQ 77.9 .F451 1996 
Link to this page	http://mirlyn.lib.umich.edu:80/F/?func=direct&doc_number=003056981&local_base=MIU01_PUB

TAG THIS PAGE  What is a Tag?

transgender history

Search tags... View this item in MTagger

Figure 17: Screen shot of full record detail in Mirlyn catalog. (February 17th, 2009)

users have attached to particular pages. By selecting one of those tags, a person would navigate to a list of all of the webpages that have been tagged with that word. Each webpage within the library website also has a tag bubble at the bottom which shows the tags that have been attached to that particular page. To take an example, on the detailed

record shown in Figure 17, the tag “transgender history” has been added.¹¹ A person could find this detailed record through a typical catalog search (described above) or by selecting any of these three tags from the general MTagger tag cloud. It also provides further research possibilities for a researcher who wants to supplement the Library of Congress subject headings “Transsexuals–Periodicals” and “Transsexualism–Periodicals.”

This record provides a useful example of how transgender materials are often integrated into a preexisting cataloging system. As a rhetorician, when I encounter detailed records I am first drawn to the Library of Congress subject headings, which for Feinberg’s book included “Transsexualism–History,” “Transvestism–History,” and “Gender identity–History.” What these categories miss, of course, is the first word in the title of the book–“transgender.” Though “Transgender people–History” is in the Library of Congress Authorities, it has not been associated with this record, for whatever reason, which is not really important here. From the three subject headings it has been assigned, it is clear that this text is about history and it seems to relate to a broad range of gender-related topics: transsexualism, transvestism, and gender identity.

Yet within the discourse of the Library of Congress Authorities, this book is not identifiable as “transgender,” despite its explicit self-definition as such. It is important to remember, too, that Feinberg is credited with popularizing “transgender” as an umbrella term, which makes the omission of that term quite glaring and somewhat ironic. While this observation could be filed away with the countless critiques of the Library of

¹¹ The tags that were added to the “classic” records were not automatically transferred to the updated records. Consequently, the the tags on the “classic” records are not viewable in the current record. This also means that if a user navigates to records through MTagger, they will likely be directed to a mix of “classic” and current records, dependent on when the tag was added.

Congress subject headings—which I will not rehearse here—it is more important to note the shifting of language that happens between the text itself and the record that claims to represent it. The tagging of this record, however, supplements the discourse of the Library of Congress subject headings by providing a corrective to the shortcomings of the LCSH.

For the non-Special Collections materials, the NTLA donation was given “a full level cataloging on everything.” This cataloging, however, was not done by the people who sought the collection. It was explained to me in the following way: “...because we are part of this big system we don’t really have control over a lot of those kinds of decisions and details because we don’t do our own cataloging up here. It gets sent down and everything gets cataloged the same way.” I spoke with one cataloger who told me that her role was to download the available bibliographic records from OCLC (Online Computer Library System), which was available for about 90% of the collection. For some records, she “did enhance the subject headings when the existing records were inadequate.” This shows that though much of the processing was predetermined and automated, she did provide some further input and expansion, though I am not clear to what extent.

Within Special Collections, the NTLA archival materials are part of the extensive Labadie collection. Everything that is in special collections is listed in a single finding aid that has two versions—one that doesn’t have names of specific people and one that does. The electronic version of the full finding aid is never circulated but given out in paper form.

In sum, the NTLA is dispersed throughout the University of Michigan library system. It can be accessed with the online library catalog, Mirlyn. Finding aids are utilized for the materials maintained within Special Collections, but they are not fully available online.

Complicating “Access”

According to the *New Oxford American Dictionary*, the word “accessible” means “able to be reached or entered.” Most often in contemporary U.S. culture this definition includes the phrase “...to people in wheelchairs,” or something similar. In other words, popular understandings of access hinge on physicality—can all people can enter into a particular space?¹² If we recall the the ARL Task Force’s definition that I quoted in the introduction—“Access encompasses the process followed to make materials of all formats available to users; the tools used to publicize materials to potential users; and the openness with which we allow our collections to be used by the public”—it seems clear that archivists are imagining access as more than simply physical. Instead, archivists often use accessible as synonymous with available and usable by researchers. But I want to push these understandings of access a bit further still.

In this section, I will draw on the above descriptions of the archival spaces and technologies to analyze the complexities of archival access through three lenses: environmental accessibility, archival language practices, and frustration in the archives.

¹² Though I do not have the space to do it justice here, disabilities studies scholarship could provide a productive and more nuanced complication of physical accessibility, which is often (mis)understood as a fairly straightforward issue. For a discussion on physical accessibility in the archival profession, see Frank H. Serene’s *Making Archives Accessible for People with Disabilities*.

Here, and throughout the rest of the chapter, I will focus my attention on both transgender archival contents and also the ways that transgender researchers might experience conducting research in these archives.

Environmental Accessibility

One element of access that can be very difficult to pin down, yet still profoundly influential, is what I will refer to as “environmental accessibility.” By environmental accessibility, I mean to imply the ways that individuals are able or unable to use an archive based on the “feel” of a space and the way a person is treated there. In order to better understand how these environmental factors work, we might usefully understand archival spaces in terms of their “geosemiotics,” which Scollon and Scollon define as “the study of the social meaning of the material placement of signs and discourses and of our actions in the material world” (2) The utility of geosemiotics as a theoretical lens is its required *placement* of discourse as located in the material world. This is particularly important for archives, as places, because the signs and discourses that dominate an archives can both communicate social meaning and have material consequences for transgender researchers.

A recent handbook jointly published by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Center for Transgender Equality, which is titled “Opening the Door to the Inclusion of Transgender People,” provides an excellent overview of the ways an organization can consciously make their space transgender inclusive. Though this handbook is specifically designed for LGBT organizations, the

same principles are certainly transportable to archives that collect transgender materials and ostensibly serve transgender users.¹³ The authors touch upon a variety of environmental cues that indicate to transgender people whether they are welcome, several of which apply to archives: the physical environment, bathrooms, the verbal environment, the questions you ask people, and communications materials (Mottet and Tanis 21).

My own experiences as a transgender researcher at each of these archives might be instructive here. Both the SMA and the GLBTHS have single-user or gender neutral bathrooms that I can use comfortably. This in turn makes me feel able to spend long research sessions in both archives, and it also indicates, for me, a genuine commitment on the part of each archive to welcome transgender users. On the other hand, the gender segregated bathrooms at the University of Michigan library where the NTLA is held were a difficult barrier to my research, in part because they were highly policed. I was forced to argue for my right to use the bathroom on the special collections floor (and as an out-of-town researcher, the only one I knew to find), which obviously made me feel unwelcome in that space. In turn, these bathroom experiences increased my anxiety while doing research, and may have even changed the amount of time I was willing (or physically able) to research in the archives.

Another aspect of the geosemiotics of an archival environment is the predominant verbal discourse and the images that are displayed. Throughout my research, I only spoke with one archivist, Bet Power, who explicitly reflected on the influence of the

¹³ I would argue that the majority of archives serve transgender patrons, whether or not they are aware of doing so. Archives that collect transgender materials, however, have a greater responsibility to be welcoming to transgender users, though it would be impossible for me to determine whether such an archive would have more transgender patrons than other archives.

environment on an archival user. He explained: “I’ve tried to be conscious about the images that go on the walls to show individuals of color when I can.” Not only was he doing this to uphold the anti-racist mission of the archive, but also to make people of color feel included into the space, especially since this particular archives is in a predominantly white area. Similarly, displaying images of transgender people around an archives and in rotating exhibits conveys a clear message to transgender users that they are a genuine part of this collection and are welcomed into this space. This functions inversely as well; if transgender visitors to an archive do not see transgender people represented or acknowledged, the implication will be that they are not welcome.

In conjunction with the accessibility of the images displayed, the verbal environment in an archive can also have strong impacts on users. Again, my own experiences might be instructive here. At only one of the archives that I visited were my preferred pronouns respected in my interactions with staff and volunteers. For non-transgender people, this may seem like a small detail. But imagine entering a space where someone incorrectly assumed that you were something that you were not—be that a particular race, age, nationality, sexuality, religion, or anything that is an important part of your identity. If an identity is incorrectly and repeatedly ascribed to a person, more than likely that person will feel uncomfortable, misunderstood, and misread. While many archivists and volunteers often spend a great deal of time trying to be aware of politically correct language in archival description, the verbal environment of an archives also hinges on the spoken language that users encounter; as Mottet and Tanis argue, “[i]f gender identities and pronouns have not been established at the beginning, it is also

important not to assume a person's gender " (24). While the habit of assuming people's gender is so ingrained, it is still worth regularly and critically examining given that the verbal environment of an archives can be so influential in welcoming or excluding transgender patrons.

Pronouns are, of course, not the only aspect of the verbal environment of an archive that shapes a researcher's experience. The verbal environment also includes things that are more fleeting, such as conversations that happen in reading rooms, and between staff and researchers. If even a small amount of transphobic language is present—in a joke, or as staff discuss a collection, for example—it has the potential to have a negative impact on a transgender researcher. I am not suggesting that transgender users are more sensitive than others; however, gender assumptions and norms permeate our culture to such an extent that they often become invisible. Many people would not identify their attachment to gender norms as transphobia, but gender norms can be experienced as transphobic when they are used intentionally as a weapon, or even inadvertently as a way to make sense of individuals who resist or deconstruct those norms.

When an archive wants to welcome transgender researchers, the environmental accessibility and geosemiotics of the archives should be important considerations for an archives to evaluate seriously and regularly. The environmental factors that I have discussed do not merely allow or disallow particular individuals from accessing archival materials—they have more power than that. Environmental accessibility can shape the way entire groups of people encounter an archives, or are excluded from using it altogether.

While many archivists and volunteers imagine a hypothetical researcher when they design organizational systems, how often do they consider how that same hypothetical researcher would feel included or excluded in the environment of their archives? It is quite possible that someone who would be included in successfully navigating the organizational system would feel too excluded by the space of that archive to be willing or able to conduct research there.

We might also think about the ways that something as ingrained as location and hours of operation are determinants of environmental accessibility. Even in the most basic sense, some archival spaces may be more or less accessible to some people—professional researchers may not feel comfortable enough to use a residential archive and non-academics may not feel comfortable enough to use a university library, for example. Though they might all be technically welcoming to all potential researchers, the limits of a particular person's comforts might prevent them from visiting at all.

In terms of operating hours, the NTLA is available typical library hours, the GLBTHS is open Saturdays afternoons and other times by appointment for members, and the SMA is open only by appointment on nights and weekends. Here again we find a spectrum where the institutional archive is at one pole, by being open the most hours, and the residential archive is at the other, by having appointment-only visitation. To invoke to the hypothetical user again—what type of researcher best fits into each of these available times? Who might be excluded by virtue of having to make an appointment or not being able to make an appointment? Though these elements of archives are typically

overlooked as merely practical, they communicate the degree to which a given archive will be environmentally accessible to a potential user.

Technological accessibility is yet another way that potential researchers may be excluded from the environment of an archive. Technological literacy can be determined by myriad factors, including class, age, experience, and formal training. While continually advancing archival technologies may facilitate easier and more efficient access for some users, the more complex archival organizational technology becomes, the more people it excludes. This is particularly important for highly institutionalized collections that have significant holdings of materials that would be relevant for people who do not regularly use archival technologies. Even for people in the academy who might consider themselves “novice” archival researchers, searching for materials in an archival collection requires a degree of comfort and fluency with finding aids and databases that is not common knowledge.¹⁴ To take it a step further, there are many people who have no comfort with computers at all. My father, for instance, has no computer literacy—how would he access materials at the NTLA or GLBTHS? In contrast, he could walk into the SMA and be on equal footing with other researchers because the organizational technology there would be accessible to him.

Environmental accessibility should not merely be evaluated based on a single user’s comfort or how those elements measure up to the archive’s ideal. Access is material—it has the power to prevent users from working with/in archives altogether. This is particularly important for rhetorical researchers to consider because though one person

¹⁴ For a good discussion about the trials of “novice” researchers, see Lisa Mastrangelo and Barbara L'Eplattenier's “Stumbling in the Archives: A Tale of Two Novices.”

may not notice access barriers in a particular collection, they will be all too evident for others. To take it one step further, access barriers have the potential to exclude whole groups of people from being able to access materials for any of the reasons I have detailed above. For rhetoricians, this should prompt us to regularly reflect not only on what we find in the archives, but what isn't being found and who isn't finding it.

The Accessibility of Archival Language

As a researcher navigates the physical, technological, and environmental access elements of an archive, another major determinant of access that looms large is language. What language does an archive speak? Despite the broad trend to standardize archival descriptive systems, the language that is used for archival description is still highly adaptable and political. As a result, the language that an archives "speaks" has wide-ranging consequences for archival practices.

As Barbara Kwasnik explains in her article "The Role of Classification in Knowledge Representation and Discovery,"

Classification is a way of seeing...Classifications can be complex or simple, loaded with information or rather stingy in what they reveal. They can reflect knowledge elegantly and parsimoniously, or they can obfuscate and hinder understanding. Some classifications enable flexible manipulation of knowledge for the purposes of discovery; some are rigid and brittle, barely able to stand up under the weight of new knowledge. It

is useful to understand the properties of various classification structures so we can exploit their strengths and work around the weaknesses. (46)

What Kwasnik usefully points out in this passage is that classifications are not merely a way of organizing materials, but they are “a way of seeing.” Every classification system has both strengths and weaknesses and from a rhetorical perspective, it is useful to interrogate how different users might have entirely different experiences with the same classification system.

Let’s start with the the most basic: the word “transgender.” “Transgender” is not a neutral term. As David Valentine explains, “‘transgender’ has emerged – both as a movement and as an identity category – primarily from within a framework established by a racialized and class-inflected gay and lesbian—and latterly, queer—activism and scholarship” (60). This move to historicize “transgender” critically positions the term as emerging out of the *dominant* modes of gay, lesbian, and queer activism and scholarship, which were (and to a large extent continue to be) generated from a white and middle-to-upper class perspective.

The consequences of this bias can be quite serious for those individuals who might be described by the term, but who would not use it to describe themselves. Valentine explains: “my concern here finally is that the young, the poor, the people of color who are understood as being transgender are increasingly having to unknow what they know about themselves and learn a new vocabulary of identity” (135). If we transport this argument—that transgender is a term that is embraced by some and forced onto others (in ways that are particularly classed, raced, and aged)—to archives, it

becomes clear that archives have the potential to reproduce the complex system of power and oppression inherent in the term.

In an earlier chapter I provided a list of the common categories that are often included under the transgender umbrella (e.g., transsexual, transvestite, cross-dresser, etc.), but it is important to note that this reclassification isn't unproblematic. As Susan Stryker explains:

The terms listed here are also the ones most often used by cultural elites, or within mass media, or within powerful professions such as science and medicine and academia. They are often derived from the experiences of white transgender people. But there are hundreds, if not thousands, of other specialized words related to the subject matter of this book that could just as easily be listed in this section on terms and definitions...The seemingly inexhaustible global catalog of specialized terms for gender variety shows how impossible it really is to group such a wide range of phenomena together under the single term "transgender" without keeping that word's definition very flexible and without paying close attention to who is using it to refer to whom, and for what reasons. (*Transgender* 23)

How flexible can "transgender" be in archival practice? It seems that there are two potential pitfalls with the use of "transgender" in archives. First, it can be used too specifically to only refer to those materials that self-referentially use the term. Or second, it could be used too liberally and could start describing people who would explicitly counter-identify with the term.

I was recently reading a LiveJournal FTM community forum where participants were debating about the language practices in the forum (a common discussion topic). A poster by the name “savethewabbit” wrote, “i am not a ‘trans man’, i am a man, period...as people with a trans history, we should all know that words have quite a big power, and such as you or me or most of us would feel offended if they referred to us as ‘she’, a part of us gets offended when they are referred to as ‘transmen’” (savethewabbit). Imagine if this poster had archival materials that were to be processed and classified; how would they be described without compromising this person’s carefully articulated identity? He explains that though he has a trans history, he is *not* a transman, but “a man, period.” He explicitly disidentifies with the term “trans” as a description of his current identity; how would archivists facilitate use of his materials in relation to the category of transgender without violating his identity?

Let us consider another example, this time a fictional one—the personal papers of a very butch, female-born person of color who often passed as male and used the identity label “bulldagger.” To begin, unless this person made it explicitly clear what his/her/hir pronoun preference was, it cannot be assumed. By using “transgender” to describe these papers, either in the finding aid or in any other access tool, an archives would be ignoring Stryker’s caution and disrespectfully and oppressively re-naming an identity (from a more privileged perspective) that already has a name. This has consequences, too, for other “bulldaggers” who might research in that collection looking for “bulldagger” materials. This line of inquiry also raises questions about how archives can accommodate culturally- and regionally-specific terminology. Would researchers be forced, following

Valentine's argument, to learn a new "vocabulary of identity," to speak a new archival language, in order to successfully navigate the materials collected in an archive?

On the flip side of this too liberal use of "transgender," is the possibility that it could be used too narrowly or conservatively. If this fictional person's papers were never labelled "transgender," they would likely become isolated from the long lineage of other people who *trans*-gender. Another consequence would be that these papers would likely be invisible to a researcher looking for "transgender" materials, which would also contribute to the perception that "transgender" is mostly a white identity. Susan Stryker writes in *Transgender History* that "it is often the most privileged elements of a population affected by a particular civil injustice or social oppression who have the opportunity to organize first" (55). Given that archives are a form of organizing (in the literal and social senses), and language such as "transgender" has a definitively white bias, it is important to interrogate the system of privilege and oppression that archives have the potential to reproduce through their language practices.

In my conversations with researchers, I found that researchers frequently had trouble locating "transgender" material that predated widespread use of the term. One researcher spoke with me at length about how ze struggled to find "transgender" materials in the nineteenth century:

I'd have to get incredibly creative to find stuff that was relevant to what I was doing. Because...obviously transgender and transsexual aren't used [in the nineteenth century]. I tried cross dresser there was nothing. There would be nothing that I could find. Any descriptor I could come up with

for what I did I wouldn't find anything. So I had to go about finding things in really kind of like roundabout ways.

K: Like what?

I mean partly, too, it was like how I was thinking about transgender, I guess. Or like how I was thinking about, you know, the kind of work that I want to do. So, I had kind of decided that I would look up Chinese immigration and I came up on stuff on like normative gender...but you know, all of it is just filed under immigration or Chinese culture, that kind of stuff. But it was very much the kind of stuff that I wanted to get to. I don't know, like...what remains of police files and police photographs and stuff like that. And I would find cases of people who were arrested under cross dressing law but they were just in there as local criminals and stuff like that...I mean I found tons and tons of stuff, but none of it was you know, catalogued in an easily recognizable way.

In order for this researcher to find materials, it was necessary to move beyond a contemporary way of thinking about transgender. Once this researcher was able to shift from transgender to cross dressing, then to local crime files, ze was able to find the desired materials. While this researcher's experience is a success story, it required a broad reframing that many researchers wouldn't choose or be able to do. Given the deeply imbedded nature of contemporary language, it can be difficult for any researcher to find historical materials that relate to current categories. This is particularly true for a term like transgender, which has only recently emerged to describe a long-standing

phenomenon that is often only captured by oppressive discourses (e.g., discourses produced through the medical and legal systems).

Another participant described her similar archival methodology as “reading against the grain.” She said:

I mean a lot of my research at the GLBT Historical Society was in a sense reading the archive against the grain and finding these places where you know, homo draws a boundary with trans...There’s all these places where trans shows up even when it’s not the explicit focus. And you know, I find that really useful way for like understanding the way that, you know, homo and trans were related to but in some ways antagonistic to each other...I mean there are all kinds of you know, interesting questions that come out of it for me. But, even then, it’s like, to take it in another direction, I think there are ways that you can look at archival material that’s not about trans, not about queer, not about gay or lesbian or anything and find really useful things in it about how to recover the history of trans identities and communities. And I was just lecturing over the last couple of days in my class this semester on trans history about some material that I found in the Huntington library about the Bohemian club in San Francisco which is this you know, elite, all-male private men’s social club and part of what they do there is cross dress and they have these elaborate, kind of hasty pudding reviews kind of crossdress theatricals that they do...I would not have found that material if I was just looking in a gay archive or a

trans archive. It was only when I was in this kind of like most, you know, general kinds of historical archives, you know...I would not have found these, you know, rich white guys crossdressing in the redwood trees at a gay archive or a trans archive. So, you know, I don't think there's one thing's better than the other. It's just that in different ways of organizing archives by collecting policy, by community or whatever, that you can ask different kinds of questions and find different kinds of evidence. And, you know, the best practice for me is one that you know, gets to traverse them all.

Language, then, cannot be a fixed practice for a researcher. If a researcher gets hung up on a particular identity category or label, such as transgender, that category can become so narrow that a researcher would fail to find anything (as was the case with both of these researchers). By expanding the places to search for "transgender" and the parameters around it, these researchers were able to successfully find things that relate to their search for "transgender" materials. It is important to note, however, that these research strategies were employed by very skilled archival researchers who were able to find ways to circumvent the limitations of contemporary language. If novice researchers were to confront the same problem, it is less likely that they would recount equally successful stories.

Beyond the ideological and social aspects of an archive's use of the term "transgender," it is also clear that "transgender" isn't always the most functional term for an archive. A staff person at the GLBTHS explained to me how difficult it can be to work

with a visitor who wants to see transgender material. She explains, “But if they are looking for, just say transgender material, I have to put in a couple different key words and I am not sure if I’ve captured all of the collections in that way either.” Even in searches using a broad category like transgender, there’s a strong possibility that there will be parts of the collection that will be missed.

This extended consideration of the use of the term “transgender” in archival settings illustrates the spectrum of political, social, and material consequences that *all* archival language practices can have. Many archivists have seriously interrogated the language at work in their archives in order to adapt it to their imagined users. As Grant Campbell has articulated in regards to gay and lesbian community-based classification systems, “the makers of subject access tools are used to asking themselves the first question: ‘who are my users?’ They will now have to tackle two additional, equally challenging questions: ‘Who am I in relation to my users, and how does my position manifest itself in the tool itself?’” (129). For some grassroots archivists, like Power, the best way to address those questions is to be extremely subjective, intentionally biased, and to become obviously ingrained with the access tools (e.g., the book classification “Bullshit”). This approach also has limitations, of course, including the risk of over-reading archival documents and the possibility that the classification categories will not make sense for all users. Moreover, this logic is not easily transportable across a spectrum of archival settings.

In a typical university library database search, classifications are typically designed to be as objective as possible, which is the opposite of the SMA’s strategy to be

intentionally subjective. As Carmichael argues, “The term ‘homosexuality’ brings up homophobic works as well as gay-positive ones unless the searcher possesses relatively sophisticated search skills and can refine an electronic search accordingly. Obviously in an age when access to information, and electronic information, is equivalent to power, these problems assume greater proportions for those whose information needs are sensitive, and subject to social proscription and prejudice” (69). The onus is therefore on the researcher to be able to navigate the differing ideological approaches of the results of a general search. The problem with this, as Carmichael elucidates, is that those who have a greater need to access this information are typically the most vulnerable to prejudice. If the classifications were to be more specific, such as having a subdivision under “Homosexuality” for “homophobic works,” some would consider that form of labeling censorship and a violation of intellectual freedom (Carmichael 85). Thus, there is a circular dilemma—is it better to use overly objective categories that offend and disenfranchise some or to use overly subjective categories that stifle and censor others?

The specific challenge for classifying and archiving transgender materials mirrors the complexity of transgender history more broadly, as I reviewed in the second chapter. How does archival visibility, facilitated by classification systems, respond to the fact that there are many transgender people who wish to remain stealth (i.e., invisible) *and* there are many transgender people who wish to forefront their transgender identity? As Campbell argues in relation to gay and lesbian grassroots archives: “If the gay community is split between two concepts of survival—integration into a universal whole and separation into a visible minority—then a classification system will have to negotiate

that split” (129). The same holds true for transgender communities and archiving and the visibility that classification systems can enable or obscure will perhaps always be catch-22.

While Power clearly articulated the politics of the SMA classification system, it isn’t just archivists for grassroots archives that consider the ways that archivists influence researchers. Michelle Light and Tom Hyry, for example, argue in *The American Archivist* that all finding aids should begin to regularly include colophons and annotations. They critique the current standards of finding aids on two counts: first, “we generally omit extremely important contextual information: the impact of the processor’s work” (217); and second, “Different individuals make different decisions about what to retain and discard, how to preserve, restore, or create order, and what to highlight in descriptive systems. These decisions are influenced by opinions, intellectual backgrounds, and areas of expertise, which by necessity vary from archivist to archivist. These subjective perspectives have a fundamental impact on how researchers identify and understand the records they use” (217).

To remedy these problems, Light and Hyry suggest that finding aids include colophons that explain relevant contextual information to unveil the processors work and annotations, which would provide commentary and supplemental information on a collection after processing has been completed. Taken together, the authors hope that colophons and annotations “would also force researchers to acknowledge the value we [archivists] add to collections and spark more dialogue between the keepers and users of

archives, which will in turn lead to greater understanding of the historical record” (229).

In sum, archives are in a difficult position with respect to language—they need to utilize broad terminology to pull together threads within a collection and yet they need to have a fair amount of specificity while remaining respectful of the chosen identities of donors and historically accurate. Archives need to constantly work to process incoming materials making it virtually impossible to return to previous descriptive data to update it when popular terminology shifts (if such updating would even be ethically desirable). While archivists and staff imagine hypothetical researchers and attempt to use language that will speak to their needs, of course these practices will always fall short for some users. What rhetoricians can take from this, then, is that the language practices within an archive also serve to facilitate or prohibit access to archival materials. We might begin to regularly ask: Is “transgender” being used to describe materials that do not contain that language? If so, what are the potential consequences? Are there other terms related to transgender identities that might better describe particular materials and better facilitate access to those materials? Is there a way to circumnavigate the archival privileging of particular terms? Again, the purpose of such analysis is not to attempt to eliminate political language from archival practices—that would be an impossible task. Instead, the complexity of words like “transgender” provides an opportunity for a more careful attention to the ways that language is working in archives.

The Missing Letter: Frustration in the Archives

Much to the disappointment of those who invest so much time in creating archives, there are probably too many ways for me to describe here that researchers become frustrated during archival research. Even when a researcher is able to navigate all of the above-mentioned access complexities, sometimes things still go wrong and as a consequence, access to archival materials is curtailed.

One of the problems I learned about most frequently from researchers was that the “right” materials can be very difficult or even impossible to find. Researchers often attribute this problem to scarcity of description. One interviewee stated,

At NTLA I found it relatively easy [to find things] because every individual item was well-catalogued in the university’s library system. The cataloging didn’t have good descriptions, necessarily, though, so I often had to request material without knowing if it were relevant or not, and there was a limit on how many items that you could request at a time, so sometimes I found that difficult.

Despite the best level of processing that a cataloguer could offer, this researcher still found a disconnect between the catalog description and the actual material. In this particular case, since NTLA material needs to be requested in advance, this lack of description has serious consequences for this researcher’s access to the material he needed.

Another way that researchers can get frustrated in the research process is when there is faulty input. This issue might be particularly possible for a professional level

non-profit archive that does use standard archival classification, but still relies on minimally trained volunteers to do some of that processing work. One person who had spent considerable time researching at the GLBTHS described to me a particularly frustrating experience that ze had: “...So the reason that I was having a hard time finding other interviews that that Susan [Stryker] had done, was that a lot of them had been entered with her last name spelled wrong. So I was putting in ‘Susan Stryker’ and I’d come up with like two interviews. And I knew that she had interviewed more than two people. But all the rest were under ‘Susan Styker.’” At the GLBTHS, the searchable database for oral histories is primarily navigated by conducting a search for the interviewer. While a single typo may have the effect of making one particular document inaccessible, this example of a systemic series of typos resulted in the practical erasure of those oral histories.¹⁵ The only reason why this particular researcher was able to eventually locate them was due to hir knowledge that Stryker had “interviewed more than two people.” Finally, a staff person was able to assist this researcher by using a printed finding guide. If this researcher had not had prior awareness of the interviews, ze would have not been able to access those materials at all.

What this story illustrates is not simply that if a person perseveres he/she/ze will find what they are looking for. What we can also learn from this is that when archival collections are made available through searchable databases, any typos or inconsistencies in inputting information about those collections can render some materials virtually

¹⁵ This analysis resonates with Stephen Mailloux’s “Reading Typos, Reading Archives” article in the *College English* “Archivists with Attitude” forum, though this is an analysis of typos in an archival access system, while Mailloux was analyzing typos in archival contents.

invisible. Though the actual artifact still exists in the collection, if it cannot be found in a database search, it is effectively absent.

Later in the interview, this researcher returned to this same instance again, saying “So it was, it was just like frustrating. And I can’t even remember but there were other little things like that. Or with, you know stuff was just cataloged like strangely I think.” Though we didn’t discuss any other specific instances where this researcher experienced strange cataloging, this is an excellent example of how researchers can sometimes feel as if the organizational system of an archive is working against them, that there is a gap between their desire and the outcome of their research.

Among these potential researcher pitfalls, perhaps the most predictable frustration a researcher might face is the division between processed and unprocessed materials. Having a backlog of unprocessed archival materials is a common enough problem. The NTLA is actually a rare exception to this trend since it was fully processed soon after it was donated to the University of Michigan. The SMA and GLBTHS, on the other hand, both have a considerable amount of unprocessed materials. At the GLBTHS the amount of unprocessed material is estimated to be around 80 percent while that number is around 15 percent at the SMA. Despite the vast difference between 80 and 15 percent, both numbers tell us that a significant amount of materials are unprocessed in each collection.

Though this may seem to be a simple issue of whether materials are processed or not, there’s actually a gray area that we might usefully understand where materials are partially processed. Sometimes, when an archive refers to unprocessed materials they mean that they have boxes in the back that are not in any database, are not searchable at

all, and that cannot be handled by researchers. These materials are colloquially referred to as “hidden collections” because they are literally and entirely hidden from researchers. In a recent article titled “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing,” Mark A. Green and Dennis Meissner report staggering statistics regarding unprocessed materials: “60% of repositories have at least a third of their collections unprocessed” (210) yet “only 44% of repositories surveyed in 2003-2004 permit researcher access to unprocessed collections” (211). Their general recommendation to alleviate this issue is to process materials more quickly by only providing the most basic description. The theory behind this recommendation is that allowing access to a full collection of minimally processed materials is preferable to allowing access to fewer materials with more detailed descriptions.

It would be interesting to find out, despite the difficulty in obtaining this data, how much transgender material might be hidden in LGBT archives. Though I would assume that transgender materials are no more or less hidden than other collections, that assumption warrants further scrutiny. When faced with growing backlogs of unprocessed materials, archivists often decide when and how extensively a collection will be cataloged based on its anticipated or actual use. Though it’s difficult to speculate how this would specifically impact transgender materials, it is interesting to note that researchers inadvertently help to determine what may otherwise seem like archivists’ subjective decisions. Also, we might consider how the everyday work of archival processing would impact transgender materials more than others. If, for example, newer acquisitions are processed last, and transgender materials are generally acquired more recently because of

the relatively recent emergence of the term, perhaps there would be proportionally more unprocessed transgender materials. Again, this line of thinking warrants further research, which I am unable to conduct at this time, but it does suggest that asking questions about processing priorities may be important for both researchers and archivists.

I spoke with one researcher who found the lack of processed materials to be a particular problem at the GLBTHS. He recollects, “I think it was after about the first week that I ‘hit the wall’ in terms of getting through their ‘well-catalogued materials.’” A wall is a telling metaphor for the moment a researcher encounters the end of processed materials—many researchers experience it as an insurmountable hurdle. After all, what can a researcher do when the archive is acting as a silent “text,” unable to communicate the contents of its collections?

For this researcher who hit the wall, this frustrating moment transformed into one of opportunity—the staff generously allowed him access to the unprocessed materials (notably an unusual allowance for any archive). At this juncture, this particular researcher felt as if he was enrolled in processing so he “was able to do some work for them to order and list materials as I researched them. (I also watched some video that hadn't been watched yet).” He recalls this act of watching a previously unwatched video with a hint of pride, of appreciated opportunity.

This “happy ending” story is not the norm, though I actually have very little data about similar researcher encounters where researchers hit the end of the processed collection. I can only guess that most researchers aren’t as able to recognize when they hit that point unless they have inside knowledge about what unprocessed materials may

be hidden. Quite often, researchers will assume that whatever materials he/she/ze was looking for is simply not part of the collection and for all practical purposes, that is often the case when materials are unprocessed and unavailable to researchers.

Taken together, scarce descriptions, typos, and unprocessed materials can significantly curtail a researcher's access to materials. While it is true that one typo could derail research or the wall of well-processed collections could foreclose new research opportunities, these research barriers are quite different from the more individual and personal access barriers that I reviewed in the first two points in this section—environmental and language-based accessibility. Yet a researcher may respond similarly, feeling excluded from the archive, feeling thwarted in his/her/hir research efforts. I don't imagine that rhetoricians are better equipped to confront such frustrations than other archival researchers. But I do believe that we are well-positioned to regularly incorporate stories of frustration and access into our scholarship. Such stories tell us a great deal about the power of archives as mechanisms of control over historical artifacts, a power that is developed through language practices, environmental accessibility, processing priorities, and many other archival procedures and experiences.

Archival Desires: Imagining Queer(er) Archival Logics

As archivists develop organizational systems to help users access archival materials, they have in mind a hypothetical researcher that they imagine aiding. The ARL's white paper "Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers," clearly explains this process: "With the diverse types of access tools listed above, it is important that special

collections librarians consider which tool will provide the most satisfactory patron access for a particular collection. This essential analysis mandates a balance between the ideal access record for ‘every patron’—and economic realities” (Jones 8). By having “every patron” in scare quotes, the authors seem to be aware that such a concept is not meant to be literal or comprehensive, but rather a projected rhetorical ideal. What lacks scare quotes is the notion of “the most satisfactory patron access,” which is a critical, if implicit, ideal that I will spend the remainder of this chapter complicating.

In the archival turn in Rhetoric and Composition, many scholars address the concept of satisfactory access, though often indirectly. It is quite common, for example, for researchers to recount serendipitous research experiences where the unlikely discovery of one artifact initiates an unexpected journey through an archive (Gold, “Accidental”; Kirsch, “Being”; Nitecki; Wider; B. Rohan; Mastrangelo and L’Eplattenier). Such serendipity is usually attributed to the researcher, as David Gold remarked in a recent interview, “we ‘strike gold,’ I think, by having a strong sense of what we *should* find” (“Interview” 43). In other words, though it may seem like chance or luck, the prepared researcher is likely to “stumble” upon the rare find. Such analyses begin the important work of identifying researcher satisfaction in the archives, but they do not take into account the archival logics that inhibit or facilitate such a process.

To call attention to the field’s focus on researcher satisfaction isn’t to point out a flaw, but rather to acknowledge that the predominant framework in the archival turn in Rhetoric and Composition has thus far been shaped by the journey of the researcher. Consider Robert J. Connors’s colorful characterization of archival research as an “August

mushroom hunt” (227). Like other descriptions of archival research, this one centers on the researcher’s perceptions and experiences. Connors explains that, “...what we do is browse with directed intention. There is a track, constraint exercised by the developing hypothesis, but we may and must dart off the track to follow a likely scent, a fascinating claim, a mysterious author, a curious fact” (227). While Connors allows for some of what he calls “play,” or searching, he implies that there is always a track that researchers must ultimately follow.

In a very recent *College Composition and Communication* article, Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch further this framework by characterizing archives as “inert until they are animated (whether worked with or discarded) by the researcher himself or herself” (331). Here again, researchers are granted agency and subjectivity while archives are positioned as passive repositories that wait for researchers to make meaning from them. In many ways, this is aligned with the traditional archival logic that predominates the archival profession, as epitomized by the ARL white paper, which revolves around providing the most efficient, satisfactory, and successful research experience possible. But archival logics, the philosophy about how an archive should be organized and experienced, do not always centralize researcher’s satisfactions.

Though I risk severe oversimplification, it is useful to conceptualize the stratification of the differences in archival logics, organizational systems, and proximities to archival materials in concrete relation to one another. Such a relationship might look something like this:

Type of archive	Archival logic	Organizational System	Proximity to material
Institutional (e.g., university special collections)	Focus on efficient access	Online-based; Follows professional guidelines for finding aids, content standards, Library of Congress headings, etc.	Far: Typically closed stacks, sometimes off-site
Professional (e.g., historical society)	Mixed focus on both efficiency and discovery	Online and in-house databases; Partial adherence to professional guidelines when possible and desirable	Mixed: Some closed stacks, some browsing
Grassroots (e.g., residential collection)	Focus on discovery	In-house, paper-based lists; No adherence to professional standards; Some creation of new standards	Close: Direct access to all materials

Figure 18: Table of archival settings.

By charting the different types of LGBT archives in this way, I hope to demonstrate two things: first, the archival elements that I have been discussing throughout this chapter are interlocking and interdependent; and second, archives can have vastly different logics, some of which suggest that archives themselves can play an active role in the research process.

As I have shown throughout this dissertation, we can also imagine archives as always already active and animated institutions. What if, a queer archival logic might suggest, we centralize the archive itself as an actor in the research process? What I'd like to suggest, though it may seem whimsical, is that there are other satisfactions and desires at work in the research process—those of the archive itself.

In suggesting that archives can “desire,” I mean to invoke a Foucauldian use of that term. In the second volume of *The History of Sexuality, The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault deploys “desire” in the following way:

In any case, it seemed to me that one could not very well analyze the formation and development of the experience of sexuality from the

eighteenth century onward, without doing a historical and critical study dealing with desire and the desiring subject.... This does not mean that I propose to write a history of the successive conceptions of desire, of concupiscence, or of libido, but rather to analyze the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves and themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being, be it natural or fallen. In short, with this genealogy the idea was to investigate how individuals were led to practice, on themselves and on others, a hermeneutics of desire, a hermeneutics of which their sexual behavior was doubtless the occasion, but certainly not the exclusive domain. Thus, in order to understand how the modern individual could experience himself as a subject of a "sexuality," it was essential first to determine how, for centuries, Western man had been brought to recognize himself as a subject of desire. (5-6)

While desire will always be associated with libido and sexuality to a certain extent, Foucault explains that a hermeneutics of desire can allow the Western person to recognize him/her/hirself as a "subject of desire." Similarly, by applying a hermeneutics of desire to archival contexts, we can begin to imagine a reciprocal process where researchers not only desire archival materials (i.e., archives as the subject of desire), by archives desire to be encountered in particular ways as well.

At the SMA, for example, Power is no less serious about considering potential researchers than the professional archivists that guide the collection practices at the NTLA and the GLBTHS. However, the archival logics that govern the SMA, which are based on his ideas of what research looks like and how archives should function, are quite different. The SMA is organized in a way that mandates discovery. Since there is no comprehensive database or catalog, SMA researchers are required to browse. As Power told me, comparing the SMA to a university archive, “I always think of this collection as the most interactive setting. You don’t need to come to me and know what you want and ask me to get it for you with gloves on...It’s more a process of discovery in that you come in here and browse and you can actually not know what you [want]. Let the collection tell you what you are looking for and find it in the process of discovery.” Of course, when a researcher cedes power to the collection in such an extreme way, it requires a considerable amount of time, and, quite likely, frustration. But is frustration always bad? Can it sometimes result in deferred satisfaction? Or perhaps a queering of satisfaction and access altogether?

If the traditional archival logic responds to a researcher’s desire to find archival materials and have “satisfaction” in that process, queer archives can flip that logic by allowing collections can have desires and satisfactions, too. The possibility that the SMA collection can “tell you what you are looking for” is a queer revision of traditional historiographic method where only researchers and archivists have desire.

The recent body of scholarship on queer temporality will be instructive here to help frame the SMA’s logic as not merely a failed efficiency model, but perhaps an

embrace of an alternative, queer logic. In the introduction to the special issue of GLQ on queer temporality, Elizabeth Freeman argues, “We are still in the process of creating...a historiographic method that would admit the flesh, that would avow that history is written on and felt with the body, and that would let eroticism into the notion of historical thought itself. This we might call a queer desire for history itself to desire” (165). I want to suggest that the archival logic of the SMA presents the possibility of a new historiographic method of archival research, one that carefully accounts for a researcher’s body moving through the space of the archive and one that takes seriously the ways that we feel archives and the ways that archives can desire. This is a queering of traditional archival logic in that it challenges the normative construction of archival research as a process where archives and archival materials are the objects of researchers’ desires.

If we recall, then, all of the complexities that may act as access barriers to archival research, we might ask: what if those “barriers” are actually more than the deferred satisfactions or the unfulfilled desires of researchers? What if they are moments that reveal an archive’s desires and an archive’s refusal to submit to the researcher’s demands? I recognize that I am flirting with a dangerous line here that personifies archives to the point of constructing an archival version of *Monster House*. But I believe that it is important to consider not only the rhetorical design and intentions of archivists alongside the desires and goals of researchers, but also the archive as an entity that exists outside of both archivists and researchers.

Ultimately, what I am arguing is that while archivists are the designers of archival logics, and while researchers have meaningful and personal experiences in the archives,

there is a dimension of archives and archiving that is outside of the control of either archivists or researchers. We generally privilege the archivist's intentionality and the researcher's experience to the exclusion of the archive itself as a text, which exists outside of, though always in relation to, both archivists and researchers. As I argued in chapter three, LGBT archives do important rhetorical work, such as resisting historical erasure, uplifting contemporary LGBT people, and inspiring social change. What this means is that LGBT archives require us to recognize that archives can be actively rhetorical and can provide more (or perhaps less) than satisfactory access to materials.

Chapter Five

Affective Encounters in the Archive: Touching the Transgender Past

The queer historian...desires an affective, even tactile relation to the past. (Dinshaw 142)

Fittingly, I want to begin this chapter with a story. A story about my own experience doing research for this dissertation. Or more accurately, a story about being a transgender person, traveling to do archival research for this dissertation.

In mid-June of 2008, I began my trip to the University of Michigan at the Baltimore airport. This airport experience started out like any other: approach the ticket counter, get a ticket, check luggage, and head to the security screening checkpoint. But unlike many people's airport experiences, my own are always laced with a very high level of transgender-related stress. Unfamiliar bathrooms, security screenings, increased documentation scrutiny, other travelers with heightened anxieties and frustrations—these are all elements of a dangerous landscape for a transgender person. At that time in my life, strangers never seemed certain of my gender—some determined I was female, some figured male, while others just couldn't make up their mind. My documentation all indicated female, and unfortunately, that piece of information is important to this story.

At the entrance to the security checkpoint, I handed a TSA employee my license and ticket. She looked at me, looked at my license, looked at me again, and again at my license. Something was amiss. She turned around, walked toward another employee, and I watched in fear as they engaged in a hushed conversation. This is the stuff of transgender nightmares. As she returned to me, I already knew that I would be informed that I had been selected for “special screening,” as if I was a recipient of a distinguished

prize. I was unceremoniously ushered off by the second TSA employee, but instead of taking me to the typical screening area, I was taken further away still. They instructed me to wait in a room that was all glass. While I waited, several personnel gathered on the other side of the glass, apparently having a debate. I saw my license being passed around and my carry-on bags being rifled through (illegally, of course, since I was not directly overseeing it).

After what seemed like a half hour, a TSA officer finally came into the room and addressed me: “Stand up buddy, or whatever the *hell* you are.” In that moment it clicked: the discussion on the other side of the glass was to determine my gender. TSA regulations require travelers to be searched by an employee of the same gender and on this occasion, they couldn’t figure out who should be sent in. The “F” on my license didn’t match what they saw as the “M” in front of them. I became a spectacle, voiceless and powerless in their debate over my gender. As I was cleared to gather my belongings, I watched in horror as the woman carrying my laptop “accidentally” dropped it to the floor. She stood back and instructed me to “pick it up,” a smirk on her face. I hastily complied, flushed with shame, as I felt many sets of eyes watch me with contempt.

To a non-transgender person, this story may sound surprising or may seem like an anomaly. But as I headed down the terminal with tears welling in my eyes, my first thought was how lucky I had been that things hadn’t gotten worse. My laptop and I both survived the encounter, and I know plenty of transgender people who have fared much worse in similar situations. Still, the trauma of the event caused a migraine to settle in the back of my head that would not leave me for over a week. This was the beginning of my

research trip to the National Transgender Library and Archive and the migraine was a constant reminder of that glass room. All week, as I looked at transgender materials in the archives, I thought about the verbal and physical violence, the trauma, that transgender people face on a daily basis. I handled artifacts, carefully wrapped in tissue paper and placed in acid-free boxes, and considered the reverence for these artifacts of now-dead transgender people in contrast to my own experiences of discrimination. I wondered about how the moment of my archival experience was framed by my life experiences as a transgender person. In other words, I was thinking about what Antoinette Burton calls the “personal encounter” with the archives.

In *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and The Writing of History*, editor Antoinette Burton explains the importance of recognizing the impacts of our personal experiences in archives:

Archive Stories is motivated...by our conviction that history is not merely a project of fact-retrieval...but also a set of complex processes of selection, interpretation, and even creative invention—processes set in motion by, among other things, one’s personal encounter with the archive, the history of the archive itself, and the pressure of the contemporary moment on one’s reading of what is to be found there. This may seem a self-evident, even a pedestrian claim; and indeed, many if not most historians operate under the assumption that history is a highly interpretative act...But whether historians fully concede or fully countenance the impact of such contingencies on their work is another question. They certainly rarely

speak of them, and even more rarely do they do so in print—though they
 are quite ready and even eager to tell their archive stories when asked, as I
 discovered in the course of writing this book. (7-8)

As I began interviewing people who had worked with or in the SMA, the GLBTHS, or
 the NTLA, I quickly developed a sense that like me, each individual also had a “personal
 encounter” with the archives. Throughout my research, I consistently found that archives
 and archival experiences *mattered* to people in ways that were both personal and
 complexly affective.

In the two previous chapters, I’ve considered the rhetorical histories and changing
 landscapes of the three archives in this study (loosely, Burton’s “history of the archive
 itself, and the pressure of the contemporary movement”), and I’ve looked at their varying
 archival logics. In this final data chapter, I turn to what I’ve found to be the most elusive
 element of transgender archiving—affects. Rather than structuring this chapter around the
 specific archives or particular affects, I have instead chosen to approach archival affects
 through the analytic of touch since it reveals a great deal about the influence of archival
 environments in shaping affective encounters in the archives.

In the archival turn in Rhetoric and Composition, the predominant genre of
 archival methods analysis is what might be dubbed the “archive journey narrative.” The
 majority of the contributions to *Beyond the Archives*, for example, tell a story about how
 a particular researcher journeyed through an archive to find historical artifacts. Given that
 I prioritize my own story at the onset of this chapter and have laced many other stories

throughout this dissertation, this is clearly a genre that I find quite fruitful. As Lucille Schultz explains in the forward to the *Beyond the Archives* collection,

Archival research can be a lonely enterprise. By naming the ways in which their work touches their lives, and the ways in which their lives touch their work, the writers of these narratives help those of us who do historical research to become part of a collective enterprise, encouraged by knowledge that when the research trail takes an unexpected turn or meets a dead end, or even veers off the road into a ditch, we are in good company.

(ix)

One benefit of relating archive journey stories is that it can create a sense of community where researchers can feel that they are “in good company.” The potential limitations of the genre are that archive journey narratives can be overly specific and disconnected from the resulting scholarship. Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to use my own archive journey narratives to illustrate how my research has been influenced by my experiences and how others may also be influenced in similar ways. But in this chapter, I will argue for and exemplify a shift from the archive journey narrative to a broader theorization of the “affective economies” of archives, to adopt Sara Ahmed’s phrase. Rather than focusing on particular people’s affects, this consideration of affective economies will attempt to account for the ways that affects circulate in and around archival artifacts and researchers, particularly in relation to proximity and touch.

Though I will continue to use story telling throughout this chapter, unlike the story telling I have done thus far, here I will recontextualize these stories within a

framework of affect theory as I use affect as an analytic. Like Kathleen Stewart's *Ordinary Affects*, which she describes as "trying to create a contact zone for analysis," I am using these stories as a "contact zone," an entry point into understanding the ways that affects work in our material lives (5). She describes her writing as an "effort to approach the intensities of the ordinary through a close ethnographic attention to pressure points and forms of attention and attachment" (5). While archives may be considered by many to be ordinary sites of ordinary encounters, I use stories to create contact zones and pressure points of analysis, through which I unfold broader arguments about the economies of affect that are at work in archives. I hope that readers will encounter these stories not as self-indulgent forays or representative examples, but rather as contact zones of analysis that continually ground the theoretical thrust of this chapter and illustrate the complex interplay between theory and practice.

As I have been doing throughout this dissertation, my focus in this chapter is on the archives themselves as I try to unpack the affective encounters with the past they make possible. In other words, my goal in this chapter is to move from the individualistic archive journey story, both mine and others, to a more theoretically inclined analysis of archives as environments that create complex circulations of affect. The moment of the archival encounter—where a researcher literally touches the past—may be a powerful moment for that individual, but it is also a ritualized encounter that is part of the larger contemporary queer turn to the past.

I begin this chapter with a section titled "Feeling the Queer Past: Queer Historiography's Attention to Affect" where I review the significant body of scholarship

on affect and queer historiography in order to demonstrate the ways that scholars have understood the particularities of queer historical identification within a complex interplay of shame and pride. After I have navigated some of the queer historiography scholarship on affect, in a section titled “Getting Close to the Past: ‘Please Fondle the Toys’” I address the spectrum of different proximities in the archives and the different ways that researchers can encounter the past. Then, I will treat several different ways of encountering the past in an archive—reaching, touching, and being touched back. As with previous chapters, I will focus specifically on transgender materials within these archives. Given that much of the work in queer historiography does not look specifically at archives or transgender materials, my goal here is to develop an approach to archival affect that draws upon the rich scholarship in queer historiography and moves it into the archival realm with particular attention to transgender materials.

It should be increasingly clear that this dissertation has been moving from a concretized and material analysis of archives to a more theoretical and abstract analysis. Methodologically, this chapter departs from the two previous data chapters in that I will not be treating each archives specifically. I have found that affects aren’t dependent on archival institutionality in any simple way. It is also important to note that in this chapter, rather than using the coded interview transcripts to cull data as I did for previous chapters, I more often returned to the actual recording of the interview so that I could better hear the emotions inflected through an interviewee’s tone.

Feeling the Queer Past: Queer Historiography's Attention to Affect

On the GLBT Historical Society's website, the use of the archives is described in the following way: "Filmmakers, academics, journalists, students, and others use the archives to craft truthful and inspiring representations of GLBT people" ("About"). This description of archival research as being intended to allow scholars to create "truthful and inspiring representations of GLBT people" captures the general tendency for contemporary queers to understand queer history as functioning to validate our contemporary identities. But should researchers use the archives to *only* create inspiring representations of GLBT people? Given that archives contain far more than just inspiring representations, this mission statement reveals that the organizers of the GLBTHS have an expectation that the archives, indeed queer history itself, will inspire. This is representative of a larger impulse in queer historical work to have what Heather Love refers to a "consistently affirmative bias" (45). It isn't coincidental that both queer archives and queer histories are often affirmative; indeed, archives and histories are deeply intertwined and interdependent. Scholarship in queer historiography has usefully interrogated the relationships between contemporary queers and the queer past, though it has yet to focus explicitly on archives. As I review queer historiography in this section, then, I will be moving toward an application of these theories to archival contexts and to transgender topics.

In the last decade or so, historiographic biases have become more apparent as scholars have begun to interrogate queer history as "affective relations across time" (Dinshaw 142). What this means is that queer historiographers have begun to

analyze the ways that the contemporary turn to history is deeply affective in that it involves not only the contemporary historian's conscious emotions, but more intrinsic and often difficult to identify affects. Affect, as it is used in queer historiography, is concisely summarized in Sally Munt's *Queer Attachments*, where she quotes Robert Masters: "As I define them, affect is an innately structured, non-cognitive evaluative sensation that may or may not register in consciousness; feeling is affect made conscious possessing an evaluative capacity that is not only physiologically based, but that is often also psychologically (and sometimes relationally) oriented; and emotion is psychosocially constructed, dramatized feeling" (5). To paraphrase this definition: affect is an evaluative sensation, that may or may not be conscious; feeling is affect that is cognitively processed and evaluated; and emotion is the social dramatization of feeling. If we simplify this into a developmental relationship, it would look something like this:

affect → feeling → emotion

Thus, affect is the most basic evaluative sensation. Queer historiographers seem to favor this term because it implies that affect isn't necessarily conscious, it isn't cognitively processed, and isn't influenced by social dramatization. Affect theory attempts to account for the most basic evaluative sensations, and when used in queer historiography, scholars consider how affects and affective encounters are at work in history and historiography.

In *Feeling Backward*, Love explains how queer historiography has recently become focused on affect:

Recently, long-standing debates about gay and lesbian history have shifted from discussions of the stability of sexual categories over time to

explorations of the relation between queer historians and the subjects they study. The turn from a focus on ‘effective history’ to a focus on ‘affective history’ has meant that critics have stopped asking, ‘Were there gay people in the past?’ but rather have focused on questions such as: ‘Why do we care so much if there were gay people in the past?’ or even, perhaps, ‘What relation with these figures do we hope to cultivate?’ (31)

Because there is a significant body of work on lesbian and gay history that affirmatively responds to the question “were there gay people in the past?”, continued work in that area can seem to be, as Valerie Traub humorously says, “Look there! Look, there’s another one!” (27). As Traub insinuates, the common historical method of recovery loses value for some once enough queer historical figures have been recovered because there is no longer any urgency to continue the work. This is relative, of course, since queer recovery is still only a recent scholarly project and there are many more historical figures that could be recovered. Still, the turn to affect in queer historiography may be understood as a response to the exhaustion of (or boredom with) the exigency of queer historical recovery work.

Affective queer historiography has also enabled scholars to argue for the ways that queer historiography can be particularly queer. As I quoted from Elizabeth Freeman in the previous chapter, “[Queer scholars] are still in the process of creating...a historiographic method that would admit the flesh, that would avow that history is written on and felt with the body, and that would let eroticism into the notion of historical thought itself. This we might call a queer desire for history itself to desire” (165). Given

that queerness is based on desire and eroticism, queer historiographers seem to be using affect as an inroads to create a particularly queer historiographic method that “admits the flesh.”¹ While this move parallel’s rhetorical historiography’s attention to the inherent subjectivity of all historical writing, queer historiography’s use of affect extends that work by accounting for desire in ways that can be personal, but are also culturally produced and circulated. In other words, queer historiography’s use of affect (ideally) does not result in a self-indulgent or myopic focus on the individual researcher, but contextualizes individually experienced affects within affective economies and queer theories of desire.

One of the most prominent threads in queer historiography’s affective turn is the interrogation of historical identification. In David Halperin’s collection of essays on queer historiography titled *How to Do the History of Homosexuality*, Halperin explains that in his earlier historical scholarship he attempted to make identification unavailable to his readers. As a classics scholar, he admits, “I really *did* want to interrupt contemporary gay men’s straightforward, uncritical identification with the Greeks” (14). Halperin here expresses a common historian’s impulse to disallow overly simplistic identification so that history cannot be made to merely confirm contemporary identity categories. He learned, however, that “there was something priggish about my insistence on the alterity of the Greeks, about my effort to get historians of sexuality to adhere unfailingly to neat, categorical, air-tight distinctions between ancient paederasty and modern homosexuality,

¹ This resonates with theories of the flesh developed by women of color scholars. As Bernadette Calafell explains, drawing on Anzaldúa, Moraga, hooks, and others, “Theories of the flesh have been central to the survival of women of color and have been one of the primary ways in which we have been able to theorize about our experiences when we have been denied access to traditional forms of knowledge production” (105). Freeman seems to be drawing on this scholarship and calling for queer scholars to similarly use embodied experiences as the basis for theorization.

as if any admission of overlap between the two could *only* be disadvantageous—sloppy, inept, ethnocentric, a wishful fantasy, a cheap thrill” (14). His position on identification softens as he realizes that “the tendency to refashion past sexual cultures in the image of our own says a lot about our own historical situation, the functioning of contemporary sexual categories, our standard ways of thinking about the past. It is richly informative in its own right” (15). Halperin’s new outlook on historical identification usefully balances a historian’s attention between the past and the present.

Halperin asks rhetorically: “if other people weren’t *different* from us, what would be the point of *identifying* with them?” (15 emphasis original).² Identification, far from being about sameness, is actually only possible through difference. He states succinctly, “Identification is desire” (15). It becomes desire, perhaps even a desire for sameness, precisely because it isn’t sameness and because it is always unattainable. In other words, contemporary queers do not need to find historical subjects that share their specific identity; instead, identification occurs when a contemporary person *desires* difference in some, often quite complex, way.

With this awareness, Halperin acknowledges that historical identification can be an important and potentially useful strategy:

Identification gets at something, something important: it picks out resemblances, connections, echo effects. Identification is a form of cognition. And the ability to set aside historical differences in order to

² This directly parallels Kenneth Burke’s definition of identification as he explains it in *Rhetoric of Motives*; “Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is no division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity” (22).

focus on historical continuities is no less crucial to our personal, political, and cultural projects than is the ethical or ascetic determination to see in the documented experiences of other peoples something else besides self-confirming reflections of ourselves. (15-16)

Thus, identification can lead to far more than self-confirming reflections of ourselves in the past—it is a form of cognition that makes visible historical continuities while perhaps even functioning to “acknowledge, promote, and support a heterogeneity of queer identities, past *and* present” (16).

When uncritically deployed, historical identification falls into the trap of ignoring or ironing out the differences between the present and the past, and between the contemporary historian and the historical subject, for the sake of uplifting sameness and continuity. In her work on queer history, Love makes the point time and again that we cannot ignore the fact that queer history is often shameful and difficult, despite our best efforts to make it affirmative. In an article on *The Well of Loneliness*, Love writes, “Too precipitous a turn from past degradation to present or future affirmation ignores not only an important historical reality but the persistence of the past in the present” (“Spoiled” 496). Love challenges the affirmative model of queer history and argues that the past is not an independent entity, cut off from the present or visions of the future.

Ann Cvetkovich shares Love’s commitment to dealing with the pain in queer history, particularly the trauma of the past. In *An Archive of Feelings*, Cvetkovich argues that “lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism—all areas of experience that are difficult to

chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive...[T]hey must enable an acknowledgment of a past that can be painful to remember, impossible to forget, and resistant to consciousness” (241). Cvetkovich is one of the few queer scholars to apply queer historiography to archives and she is correct to point out that because of the long history of queer trauma, lesbian and gay archives need to be radical to admit the persistent emotions of the past.³

This queer history of shame and trauma doggedly haunts any current work on queer history or historiography, which is often not acknowledged in uncritical affirmative identification. This results in a paradox: “Insofar as the losses of the past motivate us and give meaning to our current experience, we are bound to memorialize them (‘We will never forget’). But we are equally bound to overcome the past, to escape its legacy (‘We will never go back’)” (Love 1). Present attention to queer history is thus caught in the bind that Love calls “looking forward” while “feeling backward” (27), and her pun on “backward” (i.e., past-oriented and queer) is precisely why this paradox is inescapable.

The Stonewall Riots are a perfect illustration of this central paradox of queer history and will serve as a useful example of how affects are at work in queer historiography. In brief, when the patrons of the Stonewall Inn bar in New York City refused to cooperate with a police crackdown on the night of June 27th, 1969, it sparked several days of street riots. The first gay pride parades were held the following year at the end of June to celebrate this queer resistance, and they have been held every year since,

³ It is important to note that Cvetkovich’s focus is specifically on “lesbian and gay history.”

first across the country, and now in many places around the world.⁴ Throughout the last few decades, the event has morphed into a historical rupture that seemingly marks the end of gay oppression and the beginning of gay liberation. Of course, no single event has the power to enact such sweeping change, but the contemporary relationship to Stonewall generally has that undercurrent.⁵ While pre-Stonewall is used as perhaps the quintessential historical period that “we will never go back” to, as the gay pride celebrations recently marched past the 40-year marker, it is also certainly an indication that “we will never forget” them either.

There are a multitude of consequences to this pattern, but Love perhaps illustrates it best when she explains, that while “same-sex desire is not as impossible as it used to be,” “the survival of feelings such as shame, isolation, and self-hatred into the post-Stonewall era is often the occasion for further feelings of shame. The embarrassment of owning such feelings, out of place as they are in a movement that takes pride as its watchword, is acute” (4). Because pre-Stonewall is imagined as gay shame and post-Stonewall is represented as gay pride, Stonewall itself functions as a historical rupture that creates an expectation that contemporary queers should feel pride and not shame. As Love reminds us, “We can turn shame into pride, but we cannot do so once and for all: shame lives on in pride, and pride can easily turn back into shame” (28). There is a

⁴ It still surprises me when I hear about gay pride celebrations in other countries coinciding with the Stonewall Riots because I see Stonewall as a U.S.-specific resistance. A recent article written by Armstrong and Cragie titled “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth” argues that Stonewall became memorialized while other riots were forgotten because the event was commemorable and had mnemonic capacity, though the authors don’t discuss why it has become an internationally known event.

⁵ I am reminded, for example, of the two-part documentary *Before Stonewall* and *After Stonewall*, which succinctly illustrates my point.

fluidity and interconnectedness between shame and pride that is inherent in remembering Stonewall, and even in queer history and existence itself.

In a comical representation of a gay pride parade on *The Simpsons*, Lisa watches as a few men loudly chant, “We’re here! We’re queer! Get used to it!” (*Simpsons*). Lisa yells to them, “You do this every year, we *are* used to it” (*Simpsons*). While the first marches in the early 1970s may have, in some ways, functioned to reenact the Stonewall Riots, the continuing tradition may no longer be primarily aimed at an unaware or oppressive heterosexual population. After all, the parades and celebrations are quite predictable now, given that they happen at the same time and place every year. When the chanters on *The Simpsons* snicker back to Lisa, “spoil sport!”, we are given a hint that gay pride parades may not be for the unaware public, but rather for the marchers themselves. Pride parades allow for the performance of resistance in an affirmative form of historical memorialization. Lisa denies that such resistance is necessary because she expects and affirms the parade (“You do this every year, we *are* used to it.”), and the marchers are dismayed that she has spoiled their sport of performing pride.

Though perhaps unintentionally, this segment from *The Simpsons* depicts a white-dominated gay pride celebration, which some scholars argue is all too accurate. As Horacio N. Roque Ramírez writes in “A Living Archive of Desire: Terisita la Campesina and the Embodiment of Queer Latino Community Histories,” the performance of pride is notably only available to particular factions of LGBT communities:

For many of us queers of color...to be “in the shadows of Stonewall” can be an overwhelming struggle to create identity and community outside the

neat contours marketed on behalf of presumed global freedom, what Stonewall is meant to symbolize. In this evolving archive of Stonewall and its worldwide celebrations, the liberated white gay subject takes center stage as the queer genders and sexualities of color are left scattered in the historiographical background. (123)

Stonewall highlights the power hierarchies within LGBT communities where “the liberated white gay subject” is dominant while “queer genders and sexualities of color” are marginalized.⁶

In addition to the annual pride marches that commemorate Stonewall, a wellspring of literature on the riots has been produced, much of it also performing pride and reenacting the power hierarchies that Ramírez critiques. More apparent in these written histories, however, is the role of identification in remembering Stonewall. While Stonewall is widely cited as the birth of the LGBT movement, there has been a longstanding debate about who was actually there and who can be credited with inciting the riot.⁷ Susan Stryker succinctly summarizes this debate in a recent *Radical History Review* article:

...the role of drag queens in the Stonewall riots had become a site of conflict between transgender and normative gay/lesbian histories—
transgender activists pointed to the act of mythologizing Stonewall as the

⁶ I find Ramírez’s reference to “the evolving archive of Stonewall” to be quite provocative. His use of “archive” here seems to invoke both a collection of documents and the growing tradition of Stonewall commemorations. He also imbues “archive” with a great deal of power, which is an interpretation that I share.

⁷ For an account of an earlier riot of queer resistance, see the documentary *Screaming Queens: The Riot at Compton’s Cafeteria*, a film about the 1966 Los Angeles, California Compton Cafeteria Riots.

“birth” of gay liberation as a homonormative co-optation of gender queer resistance, while homonormative gay and lesbian commentators tended to downplay the significance of antidrag oppression at Stonewall.

(“Transgender” 152)

Exemplary of transgender activists claims on Stonewall, the New England Transgender Pride website proudly declares: “Remember Stonewall? *That was us!*” (“Transgender Pride”). Martin Duberman epitomizes the homonormative approach to the riots in his book *Stonewall*, when he claims that the riots were “*the* emblematic event in modern lesbian and gay history” (xv emphasis original). In an interview with the popular website 365 Gay News, Duberman was asked: “And what about that other myth? You know the one about the dozens of fierce drag queens holding up their stilettos while chasing away the cops?” (“Stonewall 101”). He replied, “There certainly were such people. But I don’t think the rebellion was *run* by drag queens. There were lots of ordinary patrons of Stonewall, like me. I mean, middle class white guys” (“Stonewall 101”).

In both of these examples, there’s a clear stake in relating the contemporary gay or transgender person to a particular version of Stonewall, which enables an affirmative identification with and a claiming of history as “us” and “like me.” Duberman is doing more than that, of course, as he positions himself as “ordinary” and those stiletto-wielding drag queens as unusual and other. In one short line, Duberman asserts his own gender, class, and racial normativities and creates a heroic historical lineage in his own image, which is based on similarity, not difference.

Scott Bravemann refers to such interpretations as “queer fictions of Stonewall,” which he defines as “the meanings ‘we’ attach to or find in the riots, the sense ‘we’ make of them” (68). In a chapter devoted to analyzing queer fictions of Stonewall, Bravemann insightfully notes the ways that “Queer fictions of Stonewall create various versions of ‘us’ by defining and redefining the past” (85), which as he shows, happen along problematic axes of race, class, and gender. Bravemann’s work highlights the pitfalls of contemporary deployments of Stonewall which often simplify historical identification in the process of creating a unified historical lineage (i.e., creating history in our own image). The desire at work in this type of uncritical identification is a one-dimensional desire for affirmation and positive self-reflection—the contemporary person’s desire to take pride in a historical event and lineage.

These types of identification are qualitatively different from the strategic identification that David Halperin encourages, which would include three things: first, a consciousness of what such a desire for identification tells us about the contemporary moment; second, a recognition of identification as desire for connection across difference; and third, a positioning of historical continuities as “echo effects,” which are not historical repetitions, but rather evolving iterations of the past. This is just one example of the ways that simple identification is challenged through the theoretical and critical work of the affective turn in queer historiography.

One of the reasons why over-simplified identifications and positive historical lineages continue to be so appealing is because the queer past isn’t very far removed from the queer present. As Love explains,

Today, many critics attest that since Stonewall the worst difficulties of queer life are behind us. Yet the discomfort that contemporary queer subjects continue to feel in response to the most harrowing representations from the past attests to their continuing relevance. The experience of queer historical subjects is not at a safe distance from contemporary experience; rather, the social marginality and abjection mirror our own. The relation to the queer past is suffused not only by feelings of regret, despair, and loss but also by the shame of identification. In attempting to construct a positive genealogy of gay identity, queer critics and historians have often found themselves at a loss about what to do with the sad old queens and long-suffering dykes who haunt the historical record. (32)

Love here implies that queer critics resort to the positive genealogy as a coping strategy because the shame of identifying with historical abjection is too acute. When identification follows the axis of shame, it can become a too-painful form of mirroring. Given this, it isn't surprising that contemporary queers attempt to design affirmative lineages and identifications in order to thwart the possibility of painful and shameful identifications. If contemporary queers discover a long and enduring history of queer shame and abjection, how would it be possible to dream of a better future?

Because of this history of trauma and shame, Love argues that “Queer history, is, in a sense, nothing but wounded attachments”(42).⁸ Attachment, like identification, is a method for relating to the past. The difference, I would assert, is that while identification typically implies that two individuals are aligned, attachment accounts for connections between an individual and other individuals, objects, or affects, and it includes positive, negative, and neutral relations. By describing queer history as “wounded attachments,” Love centralizes trauma in queer history and undercuts any singularly redemptive attempts to construct an affirmative genealogy of queer life. For Love, the only connection that contemporary queers can have to the past is always already wounded.

While this scholarship on queer historiography is very insightful for my project on transgender archiving, there is a disconnect between this scholarship and my research given that transgender people are not figured into this work in prominent ways. Leslie Feinberg’s *Transgender Warriors* is a notable exception to this absence, though hir text is primarily a historical account, and only secondarily a theorization of transgender historiography. The figure of the warrior in the title of the book strikes an affirmative tone and Feinberg’s main argument is indeed that, “As trans people, we have a history of resistance of which we should be proud” (128).

While this pride is parallel to affirmative gay and lesbian histories, transgender history and historiographic concerns cannot be subsumed in gay and lesbian history.

⁸ It’s interesting to consider this in juxtaposition with Royster’s discussion of “passionate attachment” in *Traces of a Stream*. Royster explains that “an acknowledgement of our *passionate attachments* reminds us that knowledge has sites and sources and that we are better informed about the nature of a given knowledge base when we take into account its sites, material contexts, and points of origin” (280). My sense is that Love and Royster share a similar understanding of the benefits of candidly interrogating attachments, but while Love is more focused on the negative aspects of oppressive queer histories, Royster is more focused on a positive genealogy of African American women’s literacy practices.

Feinberg passionately proclaims: “The struggle of trans people over the centuries is not *his*-story or *her*-story. It is *our*-story” (x). Like transgender activists claiming that Stonewall was “us,” Feinberg establishes a transgender community based on shared history that is not his and not hers, but *ours*. Given that “lesbian” and “gay” as homosexual identities rely on stable gender identification (i.e., lesbians are women who love women and gays are men who love men),⁹ Feinberg locates transgender people as outside of that binary, and as therefore needing an independent history.

Transgender Warriors follows Feinberg’s path of discovering transgender history, with the eventual outcome that Feinberg “realized that I am part of a vast movement of people who have been shamed and threatened and beaten and arrested because of the way we define our sex or express our gender. And many of us have emerged stronger and prouder” (64). Like gay and lesbian history that makes the affirmative move of being prideful that shame was defeated, which is evidence of a positive historical lineage, Feinberg relates a similar movement for transgender history. The difference, I would assert, is that while gays and lesbians had to struggle against a heteronormative history of erasure, transgender people struggle against a gender-normative history of erasure, which can sometimes come from gay and lesbian historical projects.¹⁰

Given that the shameful queer past is indeed not at a “safe distance” from contemporary queers or transgender people, it becomes clear just how complicated the role of LGBT archives to put contemporary scholars in touch with the past becomes. As I

⁹ Of course, this is a huge simplification of lesbian and gay identity, particularly given that queers of all stripes often are or are seen as gender-variant. Still, the point stands that *homosexuality* as a concept (though not always practice) relies on the assumption of attraction of sameness.

¹⁰ Recall, for example, my discussion in chapter two of Katz’s appropriation of “passing women” as really just lesbians who only passed as men for economic advantage and security.

argued in the third chapter, LGBT archives typically begin out of a prideful motivation to collect and preserve LGBT history when other institutions failed to do so. This framework of pride may then function to cushion what otherwise might be a necessarily traumatic and shameful encounter with the queer past in the archives. If historical shame is presented in an archives as in fact past, then contemporary queers can experience the pride of the successful defeat of shame. Scott Bravemann explains that “...queer fictions of the past—help construct, maintain, and contest identities—queer fictions of the present” (4). But, even with a prideful archival framework, researchers’ experience of the queer past can never be entirely predictable because affects themselves are never entirely predictable.

Our present investment in the past is in many ways pragmatic in that it allows us to maintain a stable sense of contemporary identity, albeit fictional. The reason why Bravemann calls it a “queer fiction of the present” is because the idea “that ‘we’ are ‘now’ a ‘community’ with a shared history...is very deeply troubled by queer fictions of the past that powerfully refract the historically embedded, highly consequential differences among us” (99-100). If we are honest in our return to history, then, we will fail to find the neat historical lineage of a unified community. Instead, Bravemann calls for a recognition that our interest in queer history involves a highly constructed notion of the past and is depended on our equally constructed visions of the present (e.g., “we,” “now,” and “community”).

In the moment that a contemporary queer encounters the queer past through contact in the archives, there is a collapsing of both time and space. In the opening song

of the album *The Past Didn't Go Anywhere*, Utah Phillips relates a short story that illustrates this point. He says, "I can go outside and pick up a rock that's older than the oldest song you know and bring it back in here and drop it on your foot. Now the past didn't go anywhere, did it? It's right here, right now." In a similar way, materials that are kept in archives represent the past and by touching them, contemporary researchers touch the past. Because archives radically recontextualize historical artifacts from a plethora of historical moments, all of those artifacts now exist in the present moment in a shared context where they are available for different types of archival touches.

Carolyn Dinshaw explains that in her own work, "Beyond the basic understanding that a queer history will be about the body because it is about sex, my queer history has a relation to the tactile" (39). Similarly, while the rubric of touch is important to this project because of its inherent connection to queer and transgender histories (histories of touching bodies and bodies touching), archival touches represent the moment of the archival encounter. My analysis throughout the rest of this chapter, then, is an examination of that moment of the archival encounter where temporality and spatiality collapse as contemporary researchers affectively touch the queer past. As Dinshaw writes, and as I quote in the epigraph, "the queer historian...desires an affective, even tactile relation to the past" (142). If that is the desire of historians, I would add that archives enable, perhaps even encourage, this collapsing of affect and tactility.

I specifically privilege the concept of "encounter" throughout this chapter because it requires a contextualization of archival research—both in time and space. I am intentionally shifting away from previous scholarship in queer historiography that focuses

on historical identification because that approach tends to privilege the individual researcher and the subject of identification above the context of the transhistorical encounter. While archival encounters are still deeply personal, their archival context leads me to consider affective relations in the archive as affective economies that are not dependent on any one particular individual. Though it may seem paradoxical, the archival encounter de-centers the researcher enough to show that it isn't the particular experience of any given researcher that is worthy of analysis in isolation, but rather the archival environment that catalyzes and supports the affective economies within which any given researcher takes part.

Getting Close to the Past: "Please fondle the toys!"

Perhaps the most prominent way that archival environments facilitate the circulation of affects is by allowing researchers to be close to the past. As I've shown throughout the past two chapters, archives that collect transgender material are vastly different in terms of their historical emergence, space, and archival logics. Still another way that these archives differ is in how researchers are allowed to touch the past. To illustrate the spectrum of different proximities that are possible in archives, I want to briefly relate my experiences touching the past in two very different archival settings. I will use these archive journey stories, following Kathleen Stewart's approach, as contact zones for analysis (5).

During my freshman year of college at Cornell University, I was taking a first year writing course that was focused on Shakespeare. On one particular day about mid-

way through the semester, my instructor brought us all on a field trip to Kroch Library. This library houses the Cornell Special Collections, and we there to see Shakespeare's fourth folio. I remember walking through the library then down the circular staircase and past an armed guard, thinking to myself that this place would make a good bunker in a time of war. I remember seeing the surveillance cameras that faced visitors on the way into the reading room. They reminded me of a convenience store, put on display so that everyone who entered was acutely aware of their presence. When I arrived in the room where the folio was displayed, I remember being surprised as I was given ill-fitting white gloves. You mean, *you are going to let me touch it*? For the briefest moment, I passed a finger along the edge of that folio, not even daring to flip a page. In that moment that I touched Shakespeare, I felt a surge of giddiness and excitement. Yes, I appreciate Shakespeare as much as any scholar with two literature degrees, but to offer him sole credit for my giddiness is somewhat inaccurate. It was the *touch* itself that elicited my strong emotions; I felt touched. To be able to touch something so valuable made me feel privileged. It seemed like a sacred ritual. And it was in that moment that I became attached to touching the past.

Fast forward almost ten years to the GLBT Historical Society during my first visit in August of 2008. As part of the museum-like display in the Historical Society's suite commemorating the Folsom Street Fair, a series of S&M (SadoMasochism) materials hung as if on a clothesline. A small sign behind read "Please Fondle the Toys." No



Figure 19: Display of S&M materials at the GLBTHS. (photo by author)

gloves. No protective archivists. No surveillance cameras or gun-strapped guards. And so I did touch these toys, and much more liberally than Shakespeare's fourth folio, I must admit. The exhibit encouraged my touch, it even invited a semi-erotic touch ("fondling").

I relate these stories to illustrate the vast spectrum of touches that are possible in archives that collect transgender materials. Just as the three archives I studied can be plotted along a spectrum of institutionality, so too can the archival encounters they enable be plotted along a parallel spectrum. At the grassroots Sexual Minorities Archives, I find the materials are free to be touched at will and often without supervision. In my first few research days there, I was hesitant to browse and open drawers and take down the clothes, but I became quickly accustomed to that freedom. At the GLBT Historical Society, the environment reminded me of university archives in that I was required to use gloves while handling certain materials and I worked in a reading room that is partially surveillanced. The major distinction, however, was the casual tone of the environment—it was a busy place where the background noise and traffic was more like a coffee shop than a library. In the GLBTHS's adjoining museum, I encountered many more archival objects, but most were behind glass casings. The NTLA, like most university archives, enacts more standardized policies about requesting and handling materials. I had to specifically request each item and I felt very closely watched during all of my time in the quiet research room.

The varying environments at these archives determined my ability, as a researcher, to touch the queer past. Importantly, the value I placed on the the materials I touched had no easily predictable relationship to my proximity to those materials. Consider the following: when an artifact is behind a glass case or in a protective sleeve, the message being sent is that this item is highly valued and worthy of protection. As Bet Power explains, recollecting an exhibit of SMA materials, “[Some items] were in a glass case and it qualitatively changed the value of it, the worth of it, and the interest in it because when you look in a glass case you are extremely interested in what you’re looking at and what’s inside there and you’re almost in awe and reverence of it.” Though the item itself had not *actually* changed, the different context imbued the artifact with new significance and historical worth. If I had not known who Shakespeare was that day in Cornell’s archives, I still could have inferred that the fourth folio is extremely valuable based on the security and protection for that collection and the ritual I participated in while encountering the folio.

When archival materials are this highly valued, Power also reasons that “it makes you revere it, but somehow removes it more from your personal experience, or it removes it from the human experience.” While historical artifacts may be uplifted by being untouchable by researchers, Power observes that it’s also possible that “the message being sent is, you don’t want to damage it, it’s too good for you to touch, almost.” Consequently, some researchers might encounter an encased archival object and feel pride and reverence while others feel shame and dejection. It’s even possible that the

same person could feel all of those things in different encounters, or even at at different moments in the same encounter.

The different proximities I have outlined undoubtedly effect the affective responses to archival materials. As Power carefully teases out, “On the one hand it formalizes it, there’s a respect that’s given to the object when you put it in a glass case. And there’s a protection for the object in a glass case. But simultaneously there’s a separation.” As researchers, if we can recognize and be self-reflexive of our own process of touching and feeling historical materials, we will be better positioned to understand our interpretations of them. But even one step beyond our own self-reflectivity is the important awareness that the affects we experience are part of the larger archival scene of affect production and circulation.

To more fully explain this point, I will use an example of how shoes can be handled by the three different archives. Figure 20 is a picture of a shoe that was displayed behind glass within an exhibit of GLBTHS materials in the Castro. As the caption explains, the shoe is a “Drag queen’s high heel pump” from 1991 which “struck a lesbian cop at a protest of gubernatorial veto of anti-discrimination protections.” While many archival collections are based on organizations or individuals, this artifact was kept because it memorializes a moment in San Francisco history that is ostensibly worth remembering for several reasons—a veto of a pro-LGBT piece of legislation, a protest, a drag queen’s response, and a lesbian cop caught in the struggle. Yet because these reasons are probably only important to LGBT communities, such an artifact may never have made its way into a non-queer archive. In this exhibit, it is displayed behind glass and

honored with a professional description and appearance, illustrating how valuable such an item can be within LGBT archival collections.



Figure 20: GLBTHS Castro exhibit of a drag queen's shoe. (photo by author)



Figure 21: Inside of NTLA box with Prince's shoes. (photo by author)

Figure 21 illustrates how shoes are stored at the NTLA and how they would typically be encountered by a researcher. These particular shoes belong to Virginia Prince, famed “transgenderist” and credited foremother of the term “transgender.” Carefully protected in their acid free box and cushioned with tissue paper, it is clear that Prince's shoes are stored for preservation, not presentation. They are collected because Prince is a famous figure in transgender history, and based on my research, I would guess that this holding is probably the most renowned item in the NTLA collection. Still, I was allowed to take the shoes out of the box and examine them more closely, to touch them with gloves on, though I imagine I would have been quickly reprimanded had I attempted to try them on. In other words, as a researcher, I was able to touch these shoes, but only within the rules and norms of that archival environment.

While I don't have an image of shoes from the SMA, if I did, they would be openly displayed, free to be touched and probably even to be worn. They would be the shoes of everyday people, whose names are probably no longer affiliated with the artifact.

These three different proximities—refusal to be touched, surveillanced touch, and free touch—create three very different encounters with these shoes. I've hinted at how some of these differences might influence researchers, but what is more important to remember is that these varying proximities are structural elements of archival environments. There is no intrinsic or natural way to facilitate a contemporary encounter with the past and these three archival environments illustrate how vastly different archival settings can be. In the next several sections, I will explore how these differing proximities help shape the affective economies of archives by dictating the types of archival touch that are possible.

Reaching for the Past: "I still wanted to see the dust if it was there!"

Before the past can be touched by a researcher, it must first be reached for. As my previous discussion of queer historiography suggests, contemporary reaches for the queer past are often laced with desire and a quest for communal validation. Within this broader framework of queer historiography, the search for queer history, the contemporary reach for the past is itself a type of archival encounter.

In "The Archival Traces of Desire: Vernon Lee's Failed Sexuality and the Interpretation of Letters in Lesbian History," Sally Newman recounts her frustrating failure to find evidence of Vernon Lee's lesbianism. After reading about a rose in Lee's

writing, Newman became convinced that the rose could definitively prove Lee's lesbianism. Newman writes,

[The rose] was among the first items I requested when I set foot in the Miller Reading Room at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. I was devastated when the curator told me it could not be found. I became fixated on viewing the rose, and during the weeks of my research, repeatedly asked the curator, 'Have you found it?' What is it about the image of the rose that was so intriguing? Is it that the rose is a tangible object that can stand in for something that cannot otherwise be pinned down—the ambiguous textual traces of desire? Certainly, it is emblematic of the difficulties that a lesbian historian faces in the pursuit of that 'object of desire.' What is desire, and how do we recognize its textual traces? Is it possible to 'prove' lesbian existence, desire, or behavior through archival material, and what will count as 'evidence' in this form of historical research? (53)

As someone astutely points out to her, the rose probably disintegrated after 120 years, but Newman insists, "I still wanted to see the dust if it was there!" (53 n.6). This story aptly captures the quest of many queer historians for what seems like an ever-fleeting queer history, which Newman refers to as "ambiguous traces of desire." While Newman is actively seeking the rose, what she is actually attempting to find is concrete evidence of historical lesbianism. The rose becomes her object of desire insofar as it is a metonymy for historical lesbianism. While there are no affects inherent in that rose, the process of

searching for the rose is deeply affective. As the rose continues to evade Newman, she develops a growing fixation and she becomes more deeply enmeshed in the affective process of searching for concrete evidence of historical lesbianism.

Newman's story may seem to recount one individual researcher's fixation on an elusive archival object, but the argument I want to forward here is that we can usefully situate her account within the affective economy of the archive where evidence of historical queerness is *always* elusive. As Martha Vicinus poignantly observes: "How are we ever to know, definitively, what someone born a hundred or two hundred years ago did in bed?" (qtd in Newman 58-59). And it is a point well taken. What, finally, could *prove* sexuality? And what, also, could prove gender identity? The impossibility of answering these questions is the reason why there will always be a certain amount of queer and transgender history that is impossible to evidence. As a consequence, any researcher who attempts to find definitive proof is certain to follow a quest for an object that is always just beyond our reach because it doesn't actually exist.

Heather Love explains that this elusiveness is particular to queer history because queers are "histories losers." She writes, "to reconstruct the past, we build on the ruins; to bring it to life, we chase after the fugitive dead. Bad enough if you want to tell the story of a conquering race, but to remember history's losers is worse, for the loss that swallows the dead absorbs these others into an even more profound obscurity" (21). Like Newman's traces of desire, Love describes the quest for queer history as a "chase after the fugitive dead." Carolyn Dinshaw further explains that "a *queer* history focuses on *sex* in particular as heterogeneous and indeterminate" (12 emphasis original). What these

depictions of queer history illustrate is that there are no archival objects that can determinately and finally evidence historical sexuality and gender.

Despite this, the queer *reach for the past* is itself fascinating because it is often imbued with the promise of particular affects. As Ahmed explains, “...we arrive ‘at’ [certain objects] with an expectation of how we will be affected by them, which affects how they affect us, even in the moment they fail to live up to our expectations” (“Multiculturalism” 127). For example, if a person were to buy a new car, that person would arrive at that car with the expectation of being affected in some way. But as Ahmed explains, affects are never intrinsic to objects; “Happiness does not reside in objects; it is promised through proximity to certain objects. So the promise of happiness—if you do this, then happiness is what follows—is what makes things seem ‘promising,’ which means that the promise of happiness is not in the thing itself” (“Multiculturalism” 125). Thus, a new car does not *have* happiness, though it may promise happiness to a future owner. The car seems promising because it includes the promise of happiness, but never the happiness itself.

This is helpful in understanding that many reaches for the queer past promise some form of happiness. Archives are sites of cultural memory that often function to memorialize the past. Like museums, archives are often intended to produce happiness by fulfilling a contemporary need to celebrate the past. LGBT archives in particular often uphold the present as a progression from the past and a promise of a better future. As a result, many researchers approach archives themselves as if they promise happiness and consequently, the reach for the queer archive itself is often already loaded with

expectations of the positive affects that will be experienced in the archive. Similarly, reaches for objects within LGBT archives are often expected to provide happiness. Without even having the actual touch, happiness can be transferred to researchers because happiness is often expected. As Ahmed elucidates, there is no intrinsic happiness within archival objects or archives themselves. The happiness is promised only by proximity.

From the original design of this project throughout the research process, my own research experiences have been saturated with expectations of happiness. When deciding on a research topic, the prospect of studying transgender archiving held the most promise for me as a project that would sustain my interest and attachment. As the stories that I have told throughout this dissertation further illustrate, many of my particular archival encounters also exemplify that researchers can bring complicated expectations and experiences to the archive. When I arrived at the NTLA after enduring harassment at the Baltimore airport, for example, I expected to feel happiness and pride as I encountered such highly revered transgender materials.

As I spoke with other researchers, it was clear to me that other people had also experienced happiness and joy in their archival encounters. One person told me that after her initial visit to the SMA, “I got *really* excited about [Power’s] archives.” For this person, the archive itself was exciting, rather than the research process or any particular object contained within it. In my research, I found that this was a very common experience, especially in response to the SMA. Many researchers became excited to be near the SMA, to be involved and in close proximity to it, regardless of how they used (or didn’t use) the materials. I assume that this is at least partly because the SMA is

unexpected—from the outside it looks like an ordinary house, but when a person walks in, there is an immediate immersion in the historical materials.

Another reason why researchers recounted experiences of happiness at the SMA may be because they had enjoyed the process of seeking out materials. As I've already explained, the SMA requires researchers to browse. As a consequence, every researcher participates in a particular kind of archival reach that includes a degree of effort and investment. This process might be considered a type of historical cruising where much of the thrill is in the process of seeking itself.¹¹ Furthermore, I would wager that finding an archival artifact after a lengthy process of looking for it imbues that object with more affect than if it had been found more readily.

This is a qualitatively different experience than visiting the NTLA, for example. As a university-based collection, the portion of the NTLA that is maintained in the University of Michigan library's special collections is all closed stacks and thus unavailable for browsing or immersion. The remainder of the collection was dispersed to the different divisions of the library where it would be most relevant. Consequently, the only way that a researcher can be in close proximity to the NTLA is through a digital search.¹² We might imagine, then, that while particular materials within the NTLA are touchable, the NTLA as a whole is always untouchable, though always able to be reached for. The reach for any given NTLA object is therefore a reach through the University of Michigan library catalog, the special collections librarian, and the related paperwork. But

¹¹ I am grateful to Charles Morris for suggesting the term "historical cruising."

¹² As I turn this dissertation into a monograph, I will spend a great deal more time considering the impacts of digital environments on archives and archival materials.

as I mentioned in the previous section, this cannot be taken as a clear indication that researchers value NTLA materials less. On the contrary, the institutional protections that the NTLA are afforded by the University of Michigan library may create an environment where researchers revere archival materials more because of their presumed worth.

The point I am trying to make here is that by applying Ahmed's theory, that proximity to objects promises particular affects, to archival settings, we can better understand how archival environments produce a circulation of affects. When Ahmed writes, "So the promise of happiness—if you do this, then happiness is what follows—is what makes things seem 'promising,' which means that the promise of happiness is not in the thing itself" (125), she points to the critical influence of temporality on affects. A researcher's expectation that they will be affectively influenced by an archival encounter can produce that affect prior to the actual archival touch. In archival environments, then, particular affects can be experienced just by being in proximity to archival artifacts or, in some cases, even the archive itself. As I've already argued, since there is a valuing of variable proximities in archival encounters, proximity does not generate affect only through a measurement of nearness in space (or anticipated nearness). This engagement of Ahmed's theory with the material realm of archives shows that though "emotions are not simply 'in' the subject or the object" (*Cultural* 6), they can be environmentally catalyzed.

Besides happiness, another affect that researchers recounted in their reach for the queer past was embarrassment. One researcher at the NTLA spoke with me about how he felt embarrassed by being associated with some of the materials that he requested. He

said, “NTLA was very formal in the sense that individual magazines had to be brought out by the archivists and the casing opened in front of the researcher. I found this embarrassing when the material was pornographic, which sounds silly, but it felt really weird.” It is important that the moment that he felt embarrassment and weirdness was not as he was actually touching the material, but in the moments prior to that touch. His proximity to the archival object implicated him because it associated him with interest in something pornographic. But for transgender archival material, the distinction between pornographic and non-pornographic may be rather blurry and is always highly subjective. Surgery photographs, for example, may be seen as graphic to some and pornographic to others, resulting in embarrassment for the researcher even prior to the actual touch of those materials.

I also want to suggest that this researcher’s emotion, embarrassment, is rooted in the affect of shame. As I explained above, affect is the most basic human evaluative sensation. Emotion, on the other hand, is affect that is cognitively processed and socially dramatized. What that means for this particular researcher is that though he explains that he felt embarrassment because of his proximity to the (perceived) pornography, his embarrassment may be the social dramatization of an affect, such as shame. I want to be careful to point out that I am not attempting to challenge this respondent’s experience, but rather to provide a reading of his experience that accounts for social influences on our affects/feelings. The shame that this individual experienced was at least partly influenced by the affective economy of the NTLA where pornography was powerfully, if implicitly, defined and monitored. Because of the highly institutionalized setting, it may be that

shame and embarrassment are more likely to circulate at the NTLA where encounters with historical artifacts are expected to be highly professional and less personal. Since this researcher locates his embarrassment in the moment that a librarian opens the casing in front of him, it seems clear that the affects he feels (whether they include pleasure desire, shame and/or others) are a source of embarrassment because of his interaction with the librarian and the expectations of the context. Though he didn't mention that the librarian responded in any way, this detail is almost irrelevant because he experienced these affects within the archival environment irrespective of particular individuals' responses to him. This is again another example of how reaching for the queer past is a deeply contextual affective process.

One final example of an archival affect that can be experienced in the reach for the transgender past is trauma. At one point during my interview with Power, he and I surveyed the Transgender Subject Files maintained at the SMA. He discussed with me the ways that you can read archives from a distance by seeing what subjects have the most materials. For the Transgender Subject Files, he explained, "the overarching bulk is hate crimes. It's so sad. It's just like unreal." As a result, a person could encounter the Transgender Subject files from a distance, and without even looking at any particular contents, he/she/ze could still experience trauma.

Power told me about how volunteers who worked with the Transgender Subject Files would experience trauma based on the amount of hate crime materials. Power said, "people will just sit here in the archives and get depressed: 'Oh my god, it's another one for...it's another murder. It's another stabbing. It's another transgender day of

remembrance.’” There are two things happening for this volunteer he describes: first, there is sadness as this person encounters a historical artifact related to transgender hate crimes; and second, that sadness is intensified because of the volume of similar materials that are already archived. While any single hate crime artifact can elicit very strong affects such as trauma and sadness, what is revealing about this volunteer’s experiences is that these affects are intensified when they are juxtaposed with a large collection of similar materials. It’s the sense that the material is *another* piece of evidence of transgender hate crimes that exacerbates the affects of this process.

Though I’ve given examples of specific kinds of reaches that catalyze happiness, shame, trauma, and sadness, it may be that the contemporary reach is sometimes an end in itself. As Love explains, the reach gives contemporary queers a purpose: “As queer readers we tend to see ourselves as reaching back toward isolated figures in the queer past in order to rescue or save them” (8). While reaches may promise particular affects, the actual outcomes of those reaches are always uncertain. At the same time, the reach itself is a certain and definitive action and often, the reach produces predictable affects. If, as Love suggests, the reach makes contemporary queers feel as though we are rescuing or saving the past, even if we don’t actually accomplish that, it may be enough to savor the satisfaction of trying.

Touching the Past: “Because Gertrude held it”

As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick beautifully illustrates in *Touching, Feeling*, touching is both a tactile and emotional experience. She writes, “the same double meaning, tactile

plus emotional, is already there in the single word ‘touching’; equally it’s internal to the word ‘feeling’...If anything, the association between touch and affect may be too obvious: its common sense seems to offer too easy support to modern assumptions about the centrality of sexual desire to all human contact and feeling” (17). Similarly, this section’s function to demonstrate the relationship between touch and affect may be too obvious an argument, particularly in LGBT archives where sexual touch and desire is a central collection principle. But what is less obvious are the many different types of touch (caress, fondle, stroke, brush, graze, strike, maul) and the myriad ways to touch (with hands, bodies, even eyes), which I will explore in this section.

While the sex toy display at the GLBTHS directed visitors to “Please fondle the toys!”, very rarely are researchers so clearly instructed in the kinds of touch that are allowable or possible in an archives. Most archival touches are implied in the policies of that particular collection and many are incumbent on the researcher to be aware of. Archival policies often include stipulations to touch with gloves, to use photocopies of original materials, to touch through protective covering, or to not touch something at all. The unmediated and unregulated archival touch, on the other hand, may very well be an archivist’s preservation nightmare—it increases the likelihood of theft, skin oils damage the materials, patrons can carelessly handle material, etc. For researchers, these archival policies that dictate the ways that we touch archival artifacts also dictate the type of encounter with the past that are possible.

I recently revisited Cornell’s Kroch Library to read Loren Cameron’s papers, a well-renowned transgender photographer of transgender people. It had been ten years

since I had been in that same place encountering Shakespeare's fourth folio and despite my research in this area, a part of me was still surprised that I was going to find the papers of a living transgender artist in the same collection as Shakespeare's fourth folio. Consequently, as I began to finger through the materials I was already keenly aware of how important these materials must be and how lucky I was to have the opportunity to look at them and to touch them.

I began by finding some of Cameron's photographs for his first book project of nude transgender people. Each 8 1/2 x 11" photograph was kept in a manilla envelope and I dutifully wore white gloves as I pulled each one out, examined it, and carefully replaced it. As I performed this movement over and over again, I began to notice that I was pulling the images high into the air and as I did so, two or three of the researchers at stations behind me would glance up from their work to see what was there. I felt a bit ashamed by the gaze of other researchers, just as the researcher at the NTLA described in his story about requesting "pornographic" material. What must they think of me? Would they assume that I am transgender because I am looking at these images? Was I contributing to the spectralization of transgender bodies? I found myself lowering my arms and sometimes, only taking out the photographs partially, denying myself access to the full image.

After a short while, I started to pull out one particular photograph and as the head of the person appeared, I immediately recognized her—I just emailed her a few weeks ago, had coffee with her a few months ago. As I slowly continued to lift the photograph out of the opaque envelope, a building sense of shame and guilt welled up inside of me as more

and more of her nude body appeared. Finally, this acquaintance of mine looked confidently and directly into my eyes with her naked transgender body before me. How would I meet her eyes again in person? Could I ever tell her that I saw this picture of her? I scanned her naked body with only the casual surveillance of the other researchers watching me and I felt profoundly ashamed and disrespectful toward this person that I deeply admire. This feeling was rooted in my own insecurity about imagining myself in her position—how would I feel if my own body was so openly available for scrutiny? Ironically, Cameron’s work is a celebration and honoring of the transgender body, and the willingness and ability to be naked is a way of generating pride and love for transgender embodiments. And here I was, a transgender person encountering a transgender body with the shame and insecurity that was trying to be combatted in Cameron’s project. My encounter with these images, and this one in particular, was both deeply affective and entirely unpredictable. And still, this profoundly affective encounter occurred within the context of perhaps the most expected kind of archival touch—white gloves, surveillanced reading room, careful handling of materials.

While my experiences may have been an unexpected affective response to archival materials, many archivists do try to predict or imagine how researchers will respond to historical artifacts. A telling example of this is Power’s expectations for encounters with one of the most valuable items in the SMA—a first edition author and artist signed copy of Gertrude Stein’s *The World is Round*. When people visit the SMA, they are allowed to handle that book without gloves. The excitement in Power’s speech is clear in the following passage as he describes why he allows this: “First edition, first...

it's one of less than 30 that's in existence and it may be the only one that's double signed and it's in acid free paper and it's got acid free binding in the slip cover...you know, and I'm like okay, [if it is put into a glass case] then I can't say 'here, hold it,' because Gertrude held it when she signed it, and you can hold it." In this passage, Power isn't saying that it's important to hold the book because it is a rare book and it is valuable. He is instead saying that it is important to hold it "because Gertrude held it." As he begins to refer to her more familiarly by her first name, it becomes clear that what he values about this possible touch is that it puts a person in touch with "Gertrude." It's a *holding* touch, which is a touch of enfolding and embracing, implying that it's a touch laced with care.

Aligning with Power's belief that "It's a spiritual experience to touch something," the SMA allows researchers direct touch, including the opportunity to try on clothing in the archives. For researchers who choose to do so, this type of touch is a wearing of the past. In my conversation with Power about visitors trying on clothes, we discussed a hypothetical moment where a butch would encounter a jacket in the archives that was just like one that butch wore many years ago. First, to even see it in the archives may elicit an affective response, such as pride, excitement, or shame. Then, if that butch were to put on the jacket, that moment would be a complicated performance of history that partly reenacts and partly reimagines the queer past. Unlike costumes worn in a theatrical performance, a researcher who dons a historical artifact is generally doing so for personal motivations rather than for entertainment value. Perhaps because it can be such a "spiritual experience," I have found that as a researcher, the affects generated in such an archival encounter are always just out of my reach. Wearing a garment is a different type

of remembering, and often such a personal one that it is inaccessible to others who seek to understand the encounter.¹³

The hypothetical butch's touch might lessen or eradicate the imagined distance between that butch and the past the artifact represents. This may be because the contemporary butch might be experiencing affects parallel to the original donor of the item. Power explains, "The community donates, you know, their own clothing. I mean there's a really personal item. You know, 'oh, I wore this tee-shirt at a pride march in San Francisco. So, here's the tee-shirt.'" Typically, archival collections are organized by individuals or organizations (e.g., Loren Cameron's papers or the papers of AEGIS). But in Power's example, the tee-shirt commemorates the affects that an unnamed person experienced while attending an unnamed pride parade. Not only is this an example of how sentimental value is "taken seriously as a rationale for acquisition in the gay and lesbian archive" (253), but as Cvetkovich explains, "in insisting on the value of apparently marginal or ephemeral materials, the collectors of gay and lesbian archives propose that affects...make a document significant" (243-244). Consequently, the positive affects associated with a tee-shirt may be conveyed through the continued preservation of the shirt and in the moment of the contemporary touch, that affect may be transferred. In the SMA, this process would happen as a researcher encounters the shirt hung openly, available to direct touch and wearing.

¹³ One of my favorite stories about this type of archival touch, where a researcher becomes deeply enmeshed with historical artifacts, comes from Carol Mattingly's *Well-Tempered Women*. During her research on the Women's Christian Temperance Union, she "stayed nights in Rest Cottage, sleeping in Francis Willard's bed, surrounded by pictures and mementos from her life" (3). I have often wondered how that experience informed Mattingly's research and subsequent scholarship.



Figure 22: Display of tee-shirts at the SMA. (photo by author)



Figure 23: Display of Harvey Milk's suit. (photo by author)

Consider that example in juxtaposition with the suit that Harvey Milk was wearing the day that he was assassinated, which is part of the GLBTHS collection and which was exhibited in the Castro during one of my research trips. In the secure glass case and neat presentation, Milk's clothing is uplifted as important and extremely valuable (Figure 23). Imagine being able to touch this suit, or even put it on...it is difficult to even hypothetically consider or desire this possibility, at least for me. Because Milk's suit comes to represent his assassination, it is expected that any encounter with that artifact will be somber and respectful, which would dictate the type of touch that is allowable. Inversely, a tee-shirt commemorating pride is intended to mark a joyful and celebratory experience, so archival encounters with that tee-shirt are intended to follow suit. These varying presentations and intended uses of the archival materials do not immediately mark a distinction in the ways that they are valued, but only show the different ways they are intended to be encountered.

Even more personal than clothes are a person's sex toys. The GLBTHS display of sex toys, which encouraged visitors to "please fondle the toys!", offered up archival materials for erotic touching. Like the SMA's tee-shirts, the toys are not tied to specific people (e.g., "So-and-so used this dildo in the 1920s"), but instead they represent a history of queer eroticism. The toys are offered up to be fondled, able to be touched erotically. In discussing the texts of Roland Barthes, Dinshaw explains that his work exhibits a "desire for bodies to touch across time" (3). Though I initially interpreted this passage as simply metaphorical, the sex toy display has caused me to reconsider just how close bodies can be across time. In approaching a historical sex toy with an erotic touch, I can imagine a ghostly figure of the distant past approaching the same sex toy with a very similar erotic touch. Because a sex toy is an object that elicits a particular kind of touching, it is likely that it has elicited that type of touch from many different people over the course of several decades.

In addition to the erotic touch, Love's analysis of Foucault's "The Lives of Infamous Men" suggests that another kind of queer touch is possible in the archives:

I want to suggest that the sensation—the cross-historical touch—that Foucault feels in the archive may be as much a mauling as a caress. He quickens not only to the caress of a queer or marginal figures in the past but also to the more brutal touch of the law. What happens in the archive is an encounter with historical violence, which includes both physical injury and the violence of obscurity, or annihilation from memory. (48-49)

Because Foucault is encountering historical violence through the lens of the law, Love argues, he can reproduce a sort of mauling through oppressive representations of those figures. Foucault may seek to caress the queer figures, but through the “brutal touch” of the law, it may be inevitable that his archival touch is a mauling. What Love’s argument illustrates for transgender archiving is that archival contexts can perpetuate and enable historical violences. If, for example, the materials of a transgender figure like Alan Hart are collected in a lesbian archive, that is a type of violence. Any researcher’s subsequent touch and use of those materials within that context would extend that violence and, in Love’s terms, may be more of a mauling than a caress.

In addition to these physical touches, I also want to briefly suggest that visual encounters with historical artifacts can also be a type of archival touch. In a few of the interviews I conducted, participants described encounters with the past largely in terms of the visual experience. For example, one long-time volunteer for the GLBTHS explained that he had been involved in the organization for so long because of the pleasure he found in *seeing* into people’s lives:

You imagine that such people must have existed and you can fantasize that they led these lives, but to see the actual documentation, to see the photographs, to have something of the story of actual people, it’s so astonishing. It’s so exciting. That’s one of the things that’s kept me involved in the organization for 25 years is my curiosity about those sorts of things. And my incredible pleasure when we get that kind of collection

and just getting a chance to kind of look at it and say, ‘what were those people up to?’

This volunteer takes pleasure in pursuing his own question: “what were those people up to?”, and he frames his answer through descriptions of his visual and embodied encounter with historical artifacts (e.g., seeing and looking). Though the gaze is not a tactile touch, for this volunteer, his gaze is a pleasurable and desirable contact with the past. The moment that he sees the actual documentation, his fantasies of the past are confirmed and it provides him with astonishment and “incredible pleasure.” This is an excellent example of how the double entendre of touch—to touch an object and to be emotionally touched—can be a useful framework to understand archival encounters that aren’t evaluated in terms of the importance of contact, but rather on the affective encounter.

The Past Touches Back...or Not

One of the most striking things that I discovered in my research was that there were certain objects in the archives that attracted people more than others. It happened on several occasions that I would talk to two completely unrelated researchers and they would talk enthusiastically about the same historical artifact, even when it had nothing to do with their respective projects. This phenomenon forced me to really consider how particular archival objects elicit powerful affects and I found Sara Ahmed’s discussion of “sticky objects” in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* to be tremendously insightful. She writes, “...it is the objects of emotion that circulate, rather than emotion as

such” and as a consequence, “such objects become sticky, or saturated with affect, as sites of personal and social tension” (*Cultural* 11). In an archival setting, this means that rather than imagining emotions or affects as nebulously floating around, we can instead recognize that particular objects circulate in archives already imbued with affect. For these particular archival objects, there is an accumulation of affect that causes that object to become sticky, or saturated, so that when a researcher arrives at it, the affects associated with that object are brought to bear on the encounter. Recall my experience with Shakespeare’s fourth folio: I arrived at that object already experiencing the awe and reverence that had saturated the folio so completely that its reputation preceded it and shaped my both my expectations and my affects.

It’s possible to argue that all objects in an archive are sticky to a certain extent, since archives are collections of objects that are always already saturated with affect. But there are some objects that seem more sticky than others, often for reasons that are completely unclear. In my research, I found that some of the stickiest objects were Virginia Prince’s shoes at the NTLA, the S&M materials at the SMA, and *Drag* magazine and a series of underwater fisting photos at the GLBTHS. These materials do not have a clear theme—some are erotic, some are related to significant figures, and some are related to significant moments in transgender history. Notably, with the exception of Prince’s shoes, these sticky objects are not the most famous holdings nor are they artifacts that other scholars have focused on extensively. While I may have expected interviewees who researched at the GLBTHS to discuss Milk’s suit, instead I heard from several people how amazing the underwater photos were. These photos are just one example of an

archival object that acquired a capacity to capture people's attention in a way that is entirely unpredictable. Ahmed's theory of sticky objects is one way to begin accounting for this phenomenon and it helps us begin to imagine ways that the past isn't just waiting for researchers to come and touch it, but perhaps the past is also touching researchers back.

Out of all the sticky objects I learned about, the most seemingly ordinary was *Drag* magazine. In separate interviews, two researchers spoke with me about *Drag* magazine as being the object they were most attached to in the archives. My conversation with one of these researchers is particularly revealing:

I really really really got into a lot of *Drag* magazines. Have you looked at it?

K: No.

Oh, you'd really like it. It's like, I think it was like late 60s, early 70s. But it was published out of New York but it covers a really wide range of trans, drag, and you know like like gender queer stuff. Like really wide range like nationwide. For like about three or four years. It's great. I love it. They have the whole lot there...It was really useful to me but I spent way more time reading it than I needed to, you know? I just got so caught up, it's a great, it's a really great magazine.

To be “caught up” reading something that is unrelated to your project is indeed testament to the ways that some archival objects can become sticky and can pull us in. When this researcher told me that I would really like it too, ze was characterizing *Drag* as a sticky object—an object saturated with affect that would produce the same affects in me as in did in hir.

So why was this “magazine about the Transvestite” so intriguing? From this response, it seems like the researcher was impressed that it was gender queer and nationwide in a time that such a range in content and geographic region wasn’t expected. The repeated emphasis at the onset of the discussion (“really really really”) emphasizes hir connection to the magazine, culminating in hir proclamation that “I *love* it.” How does a person come to *love* a historical artifact such as *Drag* magazine? And what, then, does that love *do*?

As we continued our conversation, that same researcher talked to me about hir desire to develop a project around the magazine:

This is kind of an aside, but like you know I was saying I have a new project that I’ve been kind of dragged into, I mean I dragged myself into it but...I was just like isn’t there something I can do with *Drag* magazine? You know, like it was almost like a reverse thing of like there’s just some



Figure 24: Cover of *Drag* magazine. (photo by author)

stuff in an archive. There's also like loads more trans periodicals from the late 50s early 60s that I didn't have time to look at. It's almost like wanting to come up with a project so I can work with those materials and I don't know what the project will be...It's just that for my discipline that's like so so so bad work. Because you need a research question of some kind, you know? Versus like I want to read them.

Finding something in an archives and then using that to develop a project is indeed the reverse of the traditional research method. But why would that negatively taint the resulting project? The reason is because this researcher freely admits, "I want to read them," and such a desire isn't a legitimated way to arrive at a project or use the archives in hir field.

In addition to the stickiness of *Drag*, I also found that people were generally very drawn to transgender surgery information. Unlike interest in other objects, which were specific to the particular archives, interviewees involved in each of the archives spoke about how interested they were in surgery materials. For example, I asked one volunteer from the SMA, "was there anything in particular that you found when you were working in the archives that you got really excited about?" She replied: "Yeah, there were lots of things...I saw like brochures on sexual reassignment surgery with like pictures and I was like, this is amazing. This is so interesting, I need to read all about this...I would always be really touched by, there are like a lot of like invitations to like fundraising events for people's surgeries or things like that." While my question was admittedly leading to a confirmation that the SMA was a place where a person should find exciting materials, I

was surprised to hear what had excited her. Her choice of words, that she was “touched by” the invitations for surgery fundraisers, is revealing in she positions the historical artifact as having the ability to touch her both physically and emotionally.

An employee who helped to process the NTLA recalled to me, “I felt moved by the medical books, specifically those about surgical procedures. Seeing those images, I couldn’t help but gain new respect for people who undergo those procedures. It made me think more deeply about what the before, during, and after must be like.” Like the SMA volunteer feeling touched by the surgery information, this person feels *moved* by a very similar touch. Both are interested in transgender surgery as an outsider, but are moved to consider how it must feel to be in that situation.

For these examples, the sticky archival objects are being touched by the researcher and, in some cases, are touching back. But what if the objects refuse to be touched? Love asks the same question of Dinshaw’s *Getting Medieval* when writes, “Dinshaw constructs a genealogy of untouched and untouchable figures, subjects constituted through refusal. These subjects are portrayed, however, as yielding to, even warming to the touch of the queer historian...Dinshaw does not consider the potential resistance of such figures to the touch of contemporary queer historians” (39-40). In an archival setting, such refusal might mean highly mediated touches, such as required use of gloves, protective sheaths, glass cases, or mediated in other ways. But it might also mean something more intangible, like the inability to understand the past through our contemporary lens, therefore rendering it inaccessible. Recall the Alan Hart story that I told in the second chapter, where a historical figure intentionally burned much of the

material trace of his life. Such a story seems like a prime example of what happens when historical figures “turned their backs on us” (Love 43).

Even including a historical artifact in an LGBT archives is already touching that object, and in fact integrating it into a historical lineage that uses contemporary identity categories to retroactively make sense of a past that did not have those same categories. What I am suggesting here is that archives themselves can also touch, particularly when they function as a place that frames all of the materials contained therein.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have used the analytic of touch to analyze the variety of affects that circulate in archives. What I hope to have demonstrated is that archival research, far from being objective, is a process laced with a variety of complex affects which result in deeply and necessarily subjective research. My debt to revisionist historiography is particularly apparent in this chapter since my argument hinges on the broader movement of rhetorical historiography to show that historical ventures are always subjective.

Most recently, the archive journey narrative has emerged as a genre of rhetorical historiography that functions as one way that scholars in our field have engaged inevitable historical subjectivities. Malea Powell, in her contribution to the collection *Beyond the Archives*, provides what I find to be an explanatory framework for why so many scholars in the field have found this genre useful. She writes, “My point here is what it feels like to be in an archive, not because I think you care how *I* feel but to illustrate the ways in which meaning is sometimes held captive by the body and how we

have to then walk through story to make sense of our experiences as writers, scholars, and as humans” (117). For Powell and many others (myself included), story-telling is a strategic method of meaning-making, a way to interrogate the production of knowledge.

Within the genre of the archive journey narrative, researchers generally recount a few primary emotions, most notably happiness and frustration (often frustration leading to happiness). For example, when I systematically scan paying particular attention to the ways contributors described their feelings during their research process, I found that the most prominent thread was happiness. To provide just a snapshot of these descriptions—Gold recounts his “happy accidents” (13), Kirsch quotes Susan Miller to describe her “joyful moment[s] of happy surprise” (25), Sutherland expressed “surprise and delight” (30), Sharer recounts being “elated” (51), Stockton laments that “it’s hard to say how exciting it was...” (58), Wider also recalls her “excitement” (67), Rohan recounts being “amazed” (74), Okawa tells of being “overjoyed” (103), Davy found parts of her process “thrilling” (128), and Mastrangelo and L’Eplattenier state quite bluntly, “we were happy” (161). At the same time, a thread of frustration was also quite palpable. Again, to provide a brief snapshot—Sharer writes, “my visit to the Library of Congress challenged my patience” (51) and that she experienced “dismay” (53), Eubanks says, “I felt like someone had hit me in the stomach, even physically ill” (108) and “I was confused, bleary eyed, and frustrated” (109), Birmingham explained “I found myself frustrated” (144).

That these two themes appear dominant in our field's archive journey narratives is perhaps a consequence of what Ahmed calls a hierarchy of emotions, where "some emotions are 'elevated' as signs of cultivation, whilst others remain 'lower' as signs of weakness. The story of evolution is narrated not only as the story of the triumph of reason but of the ability to control emotions, and to experience the 'appropriate' emotions at different times and places" (*Cultural* 3). Similarly, the affects that have been included in archive journey stories in Rhetoric and Composition have thus far been those that are most appropriate in archival settings. Even though frustration may be seen as a sign of weakness, in these narratives it is typically transformed into happiness through a combination of perseverance and serendipity.

What this chapter ultimately suggests is that in addition to examining appropriate archival emotions, we could productively engage any and all affects that arise during archival research while simultaneously becoming more aware of the archival structures and environments that generate those affects. The movement I make in this chapter is to locate my personal experiences, and the experiences of people I interviewed, within the material contexts of the archives in order to interrogate not just the affects we bring into the archive, but the affects the archive brings to us. Identifying the affects that we personally experience is just the beginning of a deeper analysis of the structural and environmental circulation of affects that archives enable.

Conclusion

Contributions: The Transgender Archival Turn

The archival turn in Rhetoric and Composition is only one facet of a broader archival turn in the academy. This increasing attention to archives is likely part of what Kirk Savage has recognized as an academic “memory boom,” a proliferation of interdisciplinary scholarship devoted to better understanding the ways that memory and memorialization function in our society. While scholars have turned to archives as sites of cultural memory, more and more academics have begun to use the concept of the archive to describe any strategic collection of materials.

Perhaps the best scholarly example of this strategic deployment of “archive” is Judith Halberstam’s chapter of *In a Queer Time and Place* titled “The Brandon Archive.” Analyzing the wealth of artifacts that have accumulated in response to the murder of Brandon Teena, Halberstam explains that, “The Brandon archive is simultaneously a resource, a productive narrative, a set of representations, a history, a memorial, and a time capsule” (23). As Halberstam positions it, the Brandon archive is a site of production and invention, not merely a static collection of historical artifacts. Halberstam continues, “The Brandon archive, then, needs to be read less in terms of the history of one extraordinary person, and more in terms of the constructions of community and self that it brings to light” (45). This illustrates the ways that a strategic deployment of “archive” can be used to argue for the rhetorical and political functions of historical materials. In this case, Halberstam dislodges the Brandon archive from the specific life of Brandon Teena and instead encourages us to consider the ways that the Brandon archive points to

broader constructions of community and self. The archive thus becomes transformative and in many ways, pedagogical.

As the concept of the archive has increasingly taken hold in the academy, scholars such as Ann Stoler have explicitly distinguished the different uses of “archive.” As Stoler writes, “One could argue that ‘the archive’ for historians and ‘the Archive’ for cultural theorists have been wholly different analytic objects: for the former, a body of documents and the institutions that house them, for the latter a metaphoric invocation for any corpus of selective collections and the longings that the acquisitive quests for the primary, originary, and untouched entail” (45). In this division, Halberstam’s Brandon archive, described as “a resource, a productive narrative, a set of representations, a history, a memorial, and a time capsule” represents an example of “the Archive” for cultural theorists.

In his influential 1992 article, “Dreams and Play: Historical Method and Methodology,” Robert J. Connors defines “Archive” as “those written and printed materials that most people think of as the only real historical sources” (225). Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch, in their 2009 article “Drama in the Archives: Rereading Methods, Rewriting History,” extend Connors and describe lowercase-A archives as “archives that don’t immediately promise insights into the practices or histories of our field” (326). While these definitions inverse Stoler’s distinctions between capital- and lowercase-a archives, they further evidence the ways that scholars working within different fields in the archival turn imagine two distinct formulations of the term “archive.”

The first formulation of archive, what both Stoler and Connors attribute to true historical study, is the very material “body of documents and the institutions that house them.” The Society of American Archivists definition of “archives” captures this formulation of archive quite well—“Archives are the non-current records of individuals, groups, institutions, and governments that contain information of enduring value. Formats represented in the modern archival repository include photographs, films, video and sound recordings, computer tapes, and video and optical disks, as well as the more traditional unpublished letters, diaries, and other manuscripts” (“So You Want”). These descriptions point to what I would refer to as institutional archives.

The second formulation of archive, frequently employed by cultural theorists, refers more broadly to any strategic collection of material. Importantly, these archives do not always need to be located in a particular place (e.g. Halberstam’s Brandon archive is an imagined grouping of materials). Though Glenn and Enoch seem to imply that lowercase-A archives are still institutionalized collections, their argument is open-ended enough that we might imagine that they are referring to non-traditional or more theoretical renderings of archive as well. I refer to this type of archive as theoretical archives, not to imply that they are intangible, but to mark their theoretical imbeddedness.

When I began this project a few years ago, though I was already familiar with the more theoretical and strategic uses of “archive,” I intentionally set those aside in order to focus exclusively on institutional archives. I designed my study to focus on three physical repositories that collect transgender materials. This was not only a strategic decision, but reflected my own dichotomous thinking about the differences between institutional and

theoretical archives. As I worked in the archives and collected data, this neat compartmentalizing of the two different categories of archives quickly began to erode.

Over time, I started to favor more expansive definitions of “archive” and I gravitated toward scholars such as Antionette Burton, who describes archives as “traces of the past collected either intentionally or haphazardly as ‘evidence’” (3). Unlike the Society of American Archivist’s definition and Stoler’s historian’s archive, Burton’s definition captures the temporal complexity of archives as sites where “traces of the past” are collected by contemporary people as “evidence.” This necessary interplay between the past and the present in all archives made me reconsider whether an archive could avoid the theoretical invocation of “archive” as “a metaphoric invocation for any corpus of selective collections and the longings that the acquisitive quests for the primary, originary, and the untouched entail.” Any motivation to archive is implicitly, if not explicitly, driven by commitments to the value of the quest for primary evidence.

As I detailed in the previous chapter, the moment of the contemporary researcher’s archival encounter with the past is deeply affective, if not with affects of longing, at least with some form of desire. Moreover, as Achille Mbembe beautifully explains,

No archive can be the depository of the entire history of a society, of all that has happened in that society. Through archived documents, we are presented with pieces of time to be assembled, fragments of life to be placed in order, one after the other, in an attempt to formulate a story that acquires its coherence through the ability to craft links between the

beginning and the end. A montage of fragments thus creates an illusion of totality and continuity. In this way, just like the architectural process, the time woven together by the archive is the product of a composition. This time has a political dimension resulting from the alchemy of the archive: it is supposed to belong to everyone. The community of time, the feeling according to which we would all be heirs to a time over which we might exercise the rights of collective ownership: this is the imaginary that the archive seeks to disseminate. (21)

Mbembe's description of archives hints at the pivotal role that researchers and archivists play in the production of history. When he notes that archives collect "pieces of time to be assembled," we can assume that the assembly he refers to will be conducted by both researchers and archivists. Revisionist historiography has already begun the important work of closely attending to the role of the (rhetorical) historian in this process.

But our field is only now beginning to consider Mbembe's next point, which is that though archives collect fragments of history, those fragments create an "illusion of totality and continuity." Consequently, institutional archives work in ways that are metaphorical and theoretical. They become metaphors for the containment and control of history. When scholars uncritically uphold institutional archives as the primary source of historical materials, we perpetuate the imaginary of collective ownership that the archive disseminates and we reinscribe its power to represent the past.

The argument that I am building toward here is that the distinction between institutional and theoretical archives, between Stoler's archive and Archive, may not be

as extreme as we imagine. Halberstam's Brandon archive and the three archives I studied in this dissertation are all constructed, rhetorically designed, and constituted by affects. They represent a larger and more complicated relationship between contemporary scholars and the pasts we study. While I am not arguing that institutional and theoretical archives are one in the same, I am suggesting that institutional archives are always already doing theoretical work as well, and that theoretical work is a critical framework for researchers to consider as we participate in archives/archiving.

I have chosen to begin this conclusion by taking a broad look at the idea of the archive because to me, the greatest contribution of this dissertation as a whole is my argument that *all* archives are rhetorical, political, and strategic. Throughout my analysis of the rhetorical dimensions of archives that collect transgender materials I have focused on three inroads that warrant particular attention—rhetorical histories, archival logics, and affective encounters. What I hope to have shown through this extended analysis is that archives that collect transgender materials, like all archives, are political and rhetorical in their process of development, their practice of collecting and making material accessible, and even their very existence. Beyond this general contribution, this dissertation also makes discrete contributions to three major areas of scholarship—Transgender Studies, queer historiography, and rhetorical historiography—which I will each address in turn.

This dissertation's contribution to Transgender Studies has first and foremost been its attention to the ways that the term “transgender” works in archival contexts. The term “transgender” is now widely embraced as an umbrella term describing a variety of individuals that defy the norms of the gender assigned to them at birth. It is increasingly

acknowledged that “transgender” is a politically charged term, originating in white experience but often used to describe people of color and others who do not identify with the term (Valentine; Stryker, *Transgender*). These complexities of naming are particularly palpable when the term “transgender” moves from theoretical and scholarly contexts to material and practical ones. By studying the ways that “transgender” works in archival settings, I have approached the term critically and I have attempted to account for the ways that it is deployed in material settings.

Another contribution that this dissertation makes to Transgender Studies is that it argues for specific considerations of transgender archival practices and historiographies. I hope to have shown that archives have a great deal of rhetorical power, and such power has consequences for historical, contemporary, and future representations of transgender people. Because of this power, it is important to scrutinize transgender archival practices to assess which communities are best represented and which aren’t. As I have already quoted, Susan Stryker points out that “it is often the most privileged elements of a population affected by a particular civil injustice or social oppression who have the opportunity to organize first” (*Transgender* 55). In archival settings, this means that we should be critically examining whether the most privileged elements of transgender populations are more frequently and accurately represented in the archives.

In addition, transgender materials should be evaluated within the broader context of the archives within which they are collected. As the editors of *Refiguring the Archive* carefully remind us,

Marginal archives often preserve materials excluded from the mainstream repositories but are themselves no less constructed than mainstream archives, and are likewise the product of process of both preservation and exclusion. Collections compiled in opposition to a particular hegemonic discourse are equally shaped by the kind of material collected, and the way it is arranged and described, as well as by what is excluded from an alternative recording of history. (Hamilton et al., 11-12)

This means that though LGBT archives may be resisting hegemonic institutions, they are no less constructed and perhaps, no less hegemonic. It is necessary to ask: are archives reinforcing hierarchies within LGBT communities and within transgender communities?

As Achille Mbembe articulately explains, power structures are inherent in any archival project:

...it seems clear that the archive is primarily the product of judgment, the result of the exercise of a specific power and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded. The archive, therefore, is fundamentally a matter of discrimination and selection, which, in the end, results in the granting of a privileged status to certain written documents, and the refusal of that same status to others, thereby judged “unarchivable.” The archive is, therefore, not a piece of data, but a status. (20)

While many LGBT archives were founded to confront traditional archives that had discriminated against LGBT people and deemed LGBT materials “unarchivable,” LGBT

archives are still a status. One researcher, whom I would identify as a very experienced researchers on transgender topics, made an off-hand comment to me early in my project that has troubled me ever since; he said, “the GLBTHS was the only archive that I thought actually had trans material unproblematically related to their collections.” He went on to critique one particular archive that I will not mention, explaining, “I wouldn’t say [that the archive is] a ‘trans-positive’ place, even though they’ve made all sorts of efforts to ‘include trans people and materials.’” What this researcher experienced highlights an argument that I’ve implicitly developed throughout this dissertation: simply making an effort to collect transgender materials does automatically destabilize power hierarchies in the archive. Because every archive is a status, the politics around the archiving of an oppressed group requires rigorous and specific interrogation from researchers, historians, and archivists.

Though queer historiographers may benefit from the aforementioned contributions to Transgender Studies, this dissertation may also help to better demarcate the role of transgender people and experiences in queer historiography. Given the intertwined histories of gender and sexual minorities, it is often quite difficult to distinguish transgender and queer historiographies. However, I believe that as queer historical work continues, it is becoming increasingly apparent that transgender histories should be recognized in their own right, not just as part of broader histories of queerness.

As an example of how it might be useful to disentangle (at least momentarily) queer and transgender histories, I will unpack one section of Carolyn Dinshaw’s *Getting Medieval*, a book that I used heavily in the previous chapter and that has had profound

impacts on queer historiography. Dinshaw devotes an entire chapter to a figure that may be interpreted as transgender—John/Eleanor Rykener. As Dinshaw explains: “[John (AKA Eleanor) Rykener] was a transvestite prostitute arrested in the act of sex with a man (who had thought s/he was a woman) and interrogated in London in December of 1394. S/he was uncategorizable: no case seems to have been pursued, perhaps—as the editors of the document argue—because the authorities did not know what to make of him/her” (38-39). Just as it was in the fourteenth century, transgender people still often remain figures that people do “not know what to make of” and Dinshaw is initially careful not to overdetermine this figure’s identity.

This strategy breaks down, though, as Dinshaw continues. She writes, “Though the cross-dressing initially may have been merely a business opportunity, as Karras and Boyd note, it’s also possible that passing had its pleasures: Rykener was apparently not only turning tricks but living and doing embroidery as a woman in Oxford” (109). This explanation of historical cross-dressing as “merely a business opportunity” reveals a contemporary need for a justifiable reason why a person would cross-dress at all.¹ Dinshaw here reads Rykener’s embroidery work as a woman to be pleasurable, as if Rykner would have had the opportunity to do so as a man. This interpretation of Rykener’s cross-dressing and prostitution as pleasurable ignores the larger socio-economic context of discrimination against people with non-normative gender identities and expressions. A more nuanced attention to the position of transgender historical

¹ There are plenty of examples of this explanation of historical cross-dressing, including Katz’s reading of “passing women,” which I discussed earlier in this dissertation.

figures would suggest that what Dinshaw sees as Rykener's "business opportunity" and "pleasure" may have been an economic necessity.

Ultimately, Dinshaw's advice for readers is that by encountering historical figures like Rykener, "queers can make new relations, new identifications, new communities with past figures who elude resemblance to us but with whom we can be connected partially by virtue of shared marginality, queer positionality" (38-39). While I do see the value in creating robust queer historical lineages, there is a real danger in collapsing what appears to be a case of a transsexual historical figure with contemporary queerness, which is often (problematically) marked exclusively by non-normative sexuality. Dinshaw elides a key question: for whom does a figure like John/Eleanor Rykener "elude resemblance"? In this passage, Dinshaw does not seem to only be pointing out the inevitable difficulty of contemporary relations to the past, but in this case such relations seems particularly difficult because she, and presumably her audience, are attempting to relate to a historical transsexual, a *queerer* queer. My point here is not to critique Dinshaw explicitly, but to illustrate how future work in queer historiography can be more carefully attuned to transgender people and experiences and the power hierarchies within LGBT communities and histories.

Another contribution that this dissertation makes to queer historiography is that by providing a detailed analysis of the power and rhetoricity of archives, I hope to have added yet another layer of complexity to queer historical projects. Scholars such as Dinshaw, David Halperin, and Heather Love have done an excellent job of teasing out the myriad ways that contemporary queers relate to the past. This dissertation suggests that

queer historical scholarship can be further extended by locating these relationships specifically within the archives. I have begun the project of transporting specific concepts, like Dinshaw's "queer touch across time," into the archives, but this is of course only an initial foray into the rich possibilities that archives offer queer historiography.

While my contributions to Transgender Studies and queer historiography include encouragement for deeper engagement with archives, the field of Rhetoric and Composition already has begun this work in the subfield of revisionist historiography and the developing archival turn. As I mention in the introduction, the archival turn has been emerging fairly recently, but is already illustrating the richness of rhetorical analysis of archives. Thus far, this scholarship has taken the form of shorter pieces, including book chapters and journal articles. I have attempted to show here that such analysis can be usefully sustained for book-length projects.

My greatest contribution to Rhetoric and Composition's archival turn has been a methodological one. To analyze archives, I use a mixed methods approach including textual, rhetorical, and visual analysis and data generated by qualitative methods. By using qualitative methods, I attempted to de-center and complicate my own experiences in the archives and access a richer picture of the practices of transgender archiving. Like many others in Rhetoric and Composition, I use the archive journey narrative to illustrate how we each have personal encounters with the archives and that these encounters influence our interpretation and use of archival materials. To deepen my analysis of my own experiences, I used interviews and direct observations to learn about how others

experienced archival research and to learn more about the intentional construction of archives. I found that qualitative methods enabled me to get a broader understanding of the production and uses of archives and I would recommend this approach to future researchers.

In this dissertation I have developed and utilized three specific analytics—rhetorical histories, archival logics, and archival affects—that I have found to be fruitful inroads for rhetorical considerations of archives. I could imagine that other scholars who wish to rhetorically analyze archives might find these analytics to be a useful starting point for their own inquiries. While the specific analytics may be best-suited to this particular archival study, I hope that the idea of using rhetorically-informed analytics to approach archives may be productive framework for other researchers.

Within rhetorical historiography, this dissertation also makes concrete contributions to feminist historiography. In a recent book chapter, “Queering Feminist Rhetorical Canonization,” I argue that “it isn’t just biologically born women who produce feminist rhetoric—gendered people of all varieties are invested and engaged in feminist rhetoric, we just need to develop ways of accounting for all of our voices” (52). One way to begin to account for a range of voices in feminist rhetoric is to interrogate our archival practices related to transgender people and other oppressed groups. Studying the specific concerns of transgender historiography and archiving would not only help to redefine definitions of gender in feminist historiography, but it would also provoke new questions about what it means to conduct recovery and gender analysis scholarship.

Beyond these specific contributions, I believe that this dissertation makes an important contribution to Rhetoric and Composition in its more general attention to transgender issues. Given that Rhetoric and Composition has only limited texts that address queerness, very few that treat transgender people and experiences, and none that are particularly concerned with transgender historiography, this dissertation introduces a new subject to the field. Particularly given the recent upsurge in media attention on transgender people and the emergence of Transgender Studies in the academy, it is a critical moment for Rhetoric and Composition to engage with transgender topics.

While I have argued that all archives are rhetorical, given my focus on transgender topics I have also insinuated that some archives are more suited to rhetorical analysis than others. Because LGBT archives were founded for very political purposes and continue to function in expressly political ways, they are fruitful sites for rhetorical investigation. This might suggest to other scholars interested in the rhetoricity of archives that community archives and/or identity-based archives are a good place to begin such analyses. It may also be a new direction for established subfields such as African American and Latino/a rhetorics to explore with respect to the specific rhetorical functions of archives in those communities.

I have argued throughout this dissertation that any scholarship that includes an archival research component can be improved by regular inclusion of the type of analysis I have done here, including attention to rhetorical histories, logics, and affects. At the same time, this dissertation has shown that this type of analysis stands on its own. Archives are institutions of cultural memory that shape not only the histories that are

written but also contemporary representations of people. Archives have potent rhetorical power that is worthy of interrogation, not just for the ways that they influence the research process, but also for the larger function they serve in our cultures.

As I imagine this project moving forward, I recognize that there is much work that needs to be done. What strikes me as the greatest limitation of this dissertation is my lack of consideration of digital archives and archival contexts. When I began this project in 2007, I was imagining archives in a purely material sense—as repositories where I could visit and touch historical artifacts. During the course of this project, digitization has become increasingly popular and though many transgender materials have not been digitized, I believe that we are on the cusp of seeing wide-spread changes to the amount and quality of digitization of archival materials.

In Rhetoric and Composition, I have only found a few instances where scholars consider digital archiving. In her article “Searching and Seeking in the Deep Web: Primary Sources on the Internet,” Elizabeth Yakel provides some initial groundwork for the ways that scholars in our field can approach and understand digitized primary sources. She explains that “archival materials are often considered to be part of the ‘deep Web,’ that portion of the Internet not easily indexed by search engines and therefore difficult to retrieve,” which means that researchers need to develop new search strategies in order to access these materials (102). She distinguishes two types of primary sources on the Web: “*digitized documents* that were originally in analog format but have been scanned and published on the Web and *born-digital materials* whose original format was digital” (112). I would add a third: documents that were originally analog and have been

transcribed and published on the Web, what we might call *digitally reformatted documents*, which actually constitute a significant portion of archival materials available online.

While Yakel's approach to digital archives has a neutral tone, I have found that scholars in our field are more often skeptical of digital archives. Alexis E. Ramsey's "Viewing the Archives: The Hidden and the Digital" presents a prime example of this skepticism:

Another difficulty with the digital archive—and by this I mean digital renderings of traditional archives—is that only certain items may be fully digitized. Items such as textiles, coins or medals, or other three-dimensional objects, lose detail when scanned—if scanning is possible at all. Indeed, one can argue that all texts, when digitized, lose something when confined to a screen. And the goal of digitizing is often to entice the research into the archive to see, touch, and smell the real thing. Being able to touch and smell documents are important aspects of archival work because a researcher should be able to take account of the collection for him- or herself and not only through digital renderings....Being physically with archived objects allows for a level of intimacy with the collection. The importance of these senses in archival work also suggests that being inside or in physical contact with a collection is paramount for a researcher to write with any level of authority on the collection. For instance, as beautiful as a dress looks on screen, something of its research

value, its uniqueness, is lost when I cannot hear how the fabric sounds as it moves, or smell the fabric, or cannot observe the ribs, stains, or stitching up close and in person because imagining how the dress functioned as a wearable object becomes too difficult. (84-85)

As a newer technology, digital archives are generally compared to traditional archives, which are seen as the standard and gauge for evaluating digitization. Consequently, as Ramsey illustrates, digital archives are devalued based on the ways that they fail to duplicate traditional archives—they “lose detail” and are “confined to a screen.”

But what if we reversed that evaluation and instead compared traditional archives to digital ones? We would find that digital archives can sometimes provide things that traditional archives cannot, such as expanded searchability, linking between artifacts, carefully constructed digital contexts for encountering materials, and magnification and illumination technologies such as infrared and blue-lighting.² Digital archives may also provide greater accessibility to archival materials for those who cannot travel. This may be particularly helpful for some transgender researchers who face increased discrimination when traveling (increased documentation scrutiny, airport security, unpredictable access to bathrooms, etc.).

While Ramsey imagines that something will be lost “when I cannot hear how the fabric sounds as it moves, or smell the fabric, or cannot observe the ribs, stains, or stitching up close and in person,” other things would be gained. Though I do think that physical touch can be profoundly important, as I illustrated in the previous chapter,

² This portrait of digital archiving admittedly exceeds commonly accessible technologies, particularly the magnification and illumination technologies. However, I am aware that they are beginning to be used and I do believe that we are moving toward the regular integration of such technologies.

digital archives present an opportunity to develop new theories of digital archival touches. Rather than privileging our own senses, digital archival encounters may move us toward more digital mediation where we are influenced by things such as screen resolutions, internet browsers, and search engines.

I want to be careful to emphasize that I do not imagine that digital archiving will be singularly redemptive or transformative. The digital age does not intrinsically hold the promise of a more democratic system of maintaining and accessing information and knowledge. But at the very least, digitization encourages us to develop new ways of accounting for digital archives that does not merely problematize it as flawed renderings of traditional archives, but instead begins to appreciate new ways of preserving, accessing, and encountering archival materials in the digital age. A digital turn in archival studies would not only put pressure on the analytics that I used throughout this dissertation, but it would also would raise new and important questions about archival practices.

If we return to Derrida's *Archive Fever*, we'll recall that his etymology of the term "archive" calls attention to both the materiality of archives and the power inherent in the archival project. He writes, "On account of [*the archons*'] publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed...They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives" (2). Derrida's lesson from the Greeks, that whoever creates the technical structure of an

archive determines what is archivable, becomes increasingly literal as we move into digital contexts. While archiving has always been a technology, primarily of preservation and access, with the influx of digitization it is a rapidly changing technology that will have profound impacts on how we encounter historical materials, how materials are maintained and preserved, and how accessible those materials become.

As I have illustrated throughout this dissertation, the complex archival processes of collection, organization, preservation, and access are important not merely for their own complexity, but for the archival responsibility to record the lives of people, the famous and the everyday. For the last five decades, LGBT people in the United States have sought control of their own historical representation through grassroots archival initiatives, many of which still exist today. And yet the ability to control historical representation by maintaining concrete archival collections is becoming increasingly fragile as the digital age progresses and as LGBT-related materials are produced at a meteoric rate. Such changes should not prompt us to imagine that LGBT archives have lost their relevance, but instead, we should be challenged to continually examine the archival practices of our cultures and subcultures so that we can remain attuned to the impacts of history on all of our lives.

Appendix A: Quantified archival contents, as available.¹

	SMA	GLBTHS	NTLA
Manuscripts	Yes Not measured	Yes ~630 collections	Yes ~28 linear feet (including other materials)
Periodicals	Yes ~800 titles, ~17,000 issues	Yes ~3,000 titles	Yes ~600 titles
Books	Yes ~4,500	No	Yes ~1,000
Comic Books	Yes Not measured	Yes Not measured	Yes ~50
Oral Histories/ Audio Materials	Yes Not measured	Yes ~516	Unknown
Subject Files	Yes “Thousands”	Yes, for news-clippings ~2-3 cabinets	Yes ~5 cabinets
Photographs	Yes Not measured	Yes ~60,000	Yes Included in footage above
Video/Visual Materials	Yes Not measured	Yes Not measured	Yes ~40 films
Posters/ Banners/Art	Yes Not measured	Yes ~1464	Unknown
Clothing/ Costumes	Yes Not measured	Yes ~847 T-shirts	Yes Not measured
Ephemera	Yes Not measured	Yes Not measured	Yes Not measured
Large Memorabilia (furniture, building materials)	Unknown	Yes Not measured, some stored off-site	Unknown
Total	<u>Unknown</u>	<u>2,103 linear feet</u>	<u>Unknown</u>

¹ SMA statistics taken from Power’s *Sexual Minorities Archives* flier. GLBTHS statistics taken from Kostkovich’s “The GLBT History of San Francisco” and personal correspondence with archivist Rebekah Kim. NTLA statistics taken from person correspondence with library staff.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

June 3rd, 2008

Research Title: “Archiving Transgender”

In-Person Informed Consent

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Kelly Rawson and I am a Ph.D. student in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric at Syracuse University. I am conducting research for my dissertation titled “Archiving Transgender.” I am inviting you to participate in this research study to discuss your experience in working with archives. Involvement in this study is entirely voluntary, so you may choose to participate or not. This sheet will explain the study and a signed copy will be yours to keep for your records. I will also maintain a signed copy for my records. In conjunction with this sheet, you are welcome to ask any questions at this time or at any time during the research.

I am interested in the ways archives actively shape what researchers find in them. I have decided to study transgender archival materials because of the recent emergence and growing popularity of the term, concept, and identity, “transgender.” As a transgender-identified scholar, I hope to better understand how the complexity of transgender is preserved, maintained, and produced in the process of archiving. By asking you about your experiences in working with archives, I hope to be able to better understand the ways that transgender materials can be located and used by visitors to the archive.

You will be asked about your experiences working in the archive as a researcher or staff person. I will ask you a series of questions that I hope will allow you to educate me on your perspective about archival research and construction. Questions will be presented to you in an informal, open-ended format. This interview will take approximately one hour of your time today. Please feel free to answer as thoroughly or succinctly as you see fit. You are welcome to decline to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer and you may stop the interview at any time.

In order to closely examine your perspective, I am also seeking your permission to audio record your responses. After our interview, I will transcribe your responses to ensure that I fully understand your position. All information will be kept confidential. If I use any material from your interview in publications or presentations, I will use a made-up name for you and I will change details about our conversation that may identify you directly. If you would prefer that I use your legal or chosen name rather than a pseudonym, please indicate this verbally during our interview, or at any time in writing. Without a request to use your legal or chosen name, I will assume that you prefer your confidentiality be

maintained through the use of a pseudonym. All audio tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of this research project.

The benefit of this research is that you will be helping me to better understand the logics of transgender archiving. Though you will not be offered any monetary benefit, I hope that through participation in this research you might begin to understand new dimensions of transgender archiving. This research will also contribute to my requirements in fulfilling of a Ph.D. degree from Syracuse University.

The risks of your participation in this study include feelings of discomfort while reflecting on your experiences with archives. The time you allot to participation in this study may also be an inconvenience to you. You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about this research, please contact Professor Margaret Himley via email at mrhimley@syr.edu or by telephone at (315) 443-4947. You are also welcome to contact the Syracuse University Institutional Review Board office (the office that protects and maintains the rights and privileges of human subject research) if you have questions, concerns, or complaints that you wish to address to someone other than the investigator. They can be reached at (315) 443-3013.

All of my questions have been answered. I am at least 18 years of age and I wish to participate in this research study.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of investigator

Date

Printed name of investigator

Contact information:

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Appendix C: Timeline of archival locations

		LEGEND
		Sexual Minorities Archives History
		GLBT Historical Society History
		National Transgender Library and Archive History
DATE	EVENT	
1974	New Alexandria Library founded in rear of lesbian feminist storefront in Chicago, IL.	
1978	New Alexandria Library moves to a private Chicago apartment.	
1979	New Alexandria Library moves to house in Western, Massachusetts.	
1982	San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Periodicals Archive started in apartment of Bill Walker and Greg Pennington in San Francisco, California.	
1983	New Alexandria Library moved into current location.	
1990	San Francisco Gay and Lesbian Periodicals Archive becomes Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California and moves to storefront in city of San Francisco.	
1991	NTLA founded in Georgia in Dallas Denny's house.	
2000	NTLA donated and moved to the University of Michigan Library system in Ann Arbor, MI.	
2002	GLBT Historical Society moves to a new location in city of San Francisco with both museum and archival space.	

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EDUCATION

Syracuse University	Ph.D., Composition and Cultural Rhetoric (May 2010) <i>Dissertation:</i> "Archiving Transgender: Affects, Logics, and the Power of Queer History" <i>Committee:</i> Dr. Margaret Himley (chair), Dr. Eileen Schell, Dr. Lois Agnew, Dr. Charles E. Morris III, Dr. Kenneth Lavender Certificate of Advanced Studies, Women's and Gender Studies (May 2007)
University of Colorado, Boulder	M.A., English Literature (May 2005) <i>Emphasis:</i> Queer/Feminist theories
Cornell University	B.A., English Literature , <i>cum laude</i> (May 2003)

RESEARCH AND TEACHING AREAS

Queer Rhetorics	Queer Theory	Historiography
Feminist Rhetorics	Transgender Theory	Archiving
Visual Rhetorics	Critical Race Theory	Digital Archiving

PUBLICATIONS

"Accessing Transgender // Desiring Queer(er?) Archival Logics." *Archivaria* 68 (Fall 2009). 123-140.

"Queering Feminist Rhetorical Canonization." In *Rhetorica In Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies*. Eds. Eileen E. Schell and K.J. Rawson. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. 39-52.

Rhetorica In Motion: Feminist Rhetorical Methods and Methodologies. Co-edited with Eileen E. Schell. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

Forthcoming

"Archive This! Queer(ing) Archival Practices." In *Practicing Research in Writing Studies: Reflections on Ethically Responsible Research*. Eds. Katy Powell and Pam Takayoshi. Hampton Press.

Book Reviews

Review of Sally Hines' *TransForming gender: Transgender Practices of identity, intimacy and care* (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2007). Co-authored with Avery Brooks Tompkins. *Journal of Gender Studies* 19.1 (December 2010).

Work In Progress

"Queer Archives/Archival Queers." Co-authored with Charles E. Morris III. For *Re/Theorizing Writing Histories of Rhetoric*. Ed. Michelle Ballif.

HONORS

2009-2010	Syracuse University Humanities Center Dissertation Fellowship
2008	Syracuse University Research Travel Grant
2003	University of Colorado Scholastic Fellowship
2003	Cornell University LGBT Scholarship Prize for Research

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

“Negotiating Difference: The Logics of Transgender Archiving.” Paper presented at the TransRhetorics Conference, Ithaca, NY. March, 2009.

“Anti-Racist Scholarship: White Scholars Working in White Space.” Paper presented at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, San Francisco, CA. March, 2009.

“Structuring Transgender: Situating the ‘T’ in LGBT Archives.” Paper presented at GLBT ALMS Conference, New York, NY. May, 2008.

“Reflecting Transgender Lives: Transgender Archives as Rhetorical Mirrors.” Paper presented at Transsomatechnics Conference, Vancouver, BC, Canada. May, 2008.

“Prismatic Reflections: Mirroring Trans Identity.” Paper presented at Regional Queer Graduate Student Conference, Syracuse, NY. November, 2007.

“Crossing Out the White People: *The Watermelon Woman*’s Revision of Homonormative Queer History.” Paper presented at Conference on College Composition and Communication, New York, NY. March, 2007.

“On the Question of Instructor Authenticity: The Raced Body in the Writing Classroom.” Paper presented at Race and Pedagogies Conference, Tacoma, WA. September, 2006.

“Queer[ing] Silence and Silencing Queer: Explorations in Queer Rhetorics of Silence.” Paper presented at the Lavender Languages Conference, Washington DC. February, 2006.

“*The Color Purple* as an Economic Model: Discovering a Black, Lesbian, Feminist, Natural Capitalism.” Paper presented at the Midwest Modern Language Association, St. Louis, MO. November, 2004.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

“Reporting with Respect: Covering Stories with Transgender, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community Members.” Training session held for local media, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. April, 2009.

“Teaching LGBT Topics.” Seminar hosted for the Future Professoriate Program, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. October, 2008.

“Outing Identities in the Classroom.” Seminar hosted for the Future Professoriate Program, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY. September, 2008.

“Life Outside the Mold: Butch and Androgynous Women's Appearance, Performance, and Society's Response.” Workshop presented at Power of Women Conference, Cortland, NY. April, 2006.

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

“Queer Rhetorics.” Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute. Pennsylvania State University. June, 2009.

“Rhetorical Research Methods.” Rhetoric Society of America Summer Institute. Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. June, 2007.

Future Professoriate Program Annual Conference. Syracuse University. May, 2007.

“Feminist Rhetorical Inquiry, Collaboration, and Activism.” Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. April, 2007.

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

2005-2009	Syracuse University, Teaching Associate
2007	Syracuse University, Writing Consultant
2003-2005	University of Colorado, Boulder, Teaching Assistant

COURSES TAUGHT

Syracuse University	WRT 104: Introduction to College Writing WRT 105 BASIC: Practices of Academic Writing WRT 105: Analysis, Argument, Academic Writing WRT 120: Writing Enrichment WRT 205: Critical Inquiry and Research WRT 301: Writing, Publics, Power Writing Center Consultant
University of Colorado, Boulder	ENG 1001: Freshman Writing Seminar ENG 2010: Literary Theory (TA) ENG 1600: Masterpieces of American Literature (TA)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

2009	Queer Memory Symposium, Principal Organizer
2008	Feminist Symposium Planning Committee, Member
2008-2009	Transgender Task Force, Member
2006-2009	Senate Committee on LGBT Concerns, Graduate Student Rep.
2007	Third Year Review Committee, Graduate Student Rep.
2007	Handbook Selection Committee, Graduate Student Rep.
2006-2007	Lower Division Committee, Graduate Student Intern
2005-2007	CCR Graduate Collective, Co-Coordinator

COMMUNITY SERVICE & LEADERSHIP

2008-2009	Transgender Kids Group, Coordinator/Facilitator
2007-2009	Transgender Youth Group, Coordinator/Facilitator
2007-2009	LGBTQ Youth Center, Tutor/Group Facilitator

2005	Dream Catcher Center, Writing Tutor
2003	Groton Head Start, Childhood Educator
2001-2002	Gannett Health Center, Sexual Health Intern
2001	Girls Vacation Fund, Lead Facilitator

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

Conference on College Composition and Communication
Modern Language Association
National Council of Teachers of English
Rhetoric Society of America
Society of American Archivists